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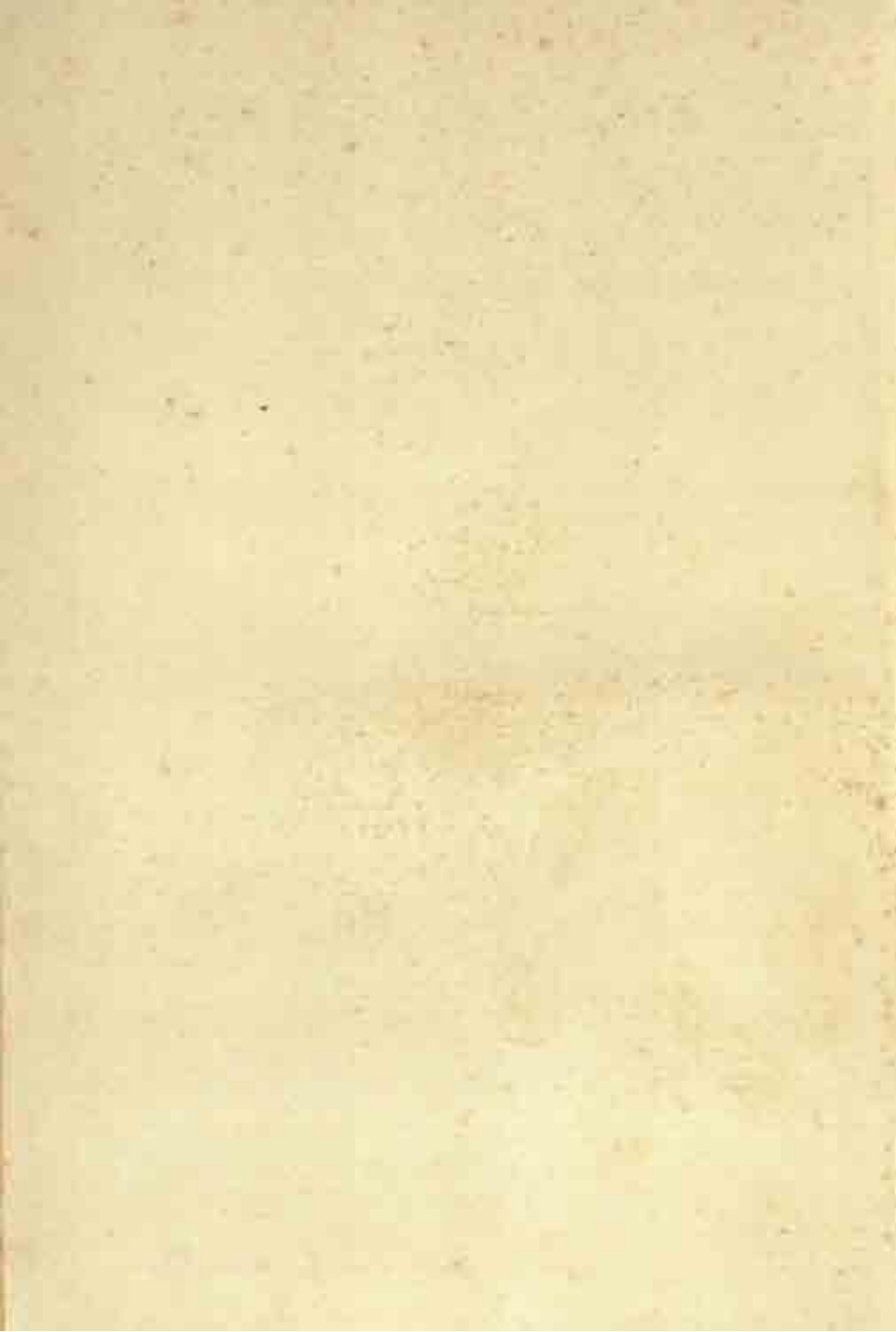
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MUFFS AND MORALS







PROPRIETY



MISS DIANA DORS IN A  
FILM BEAUTY CONTEST AT  
FOLKESTONE, 1951



LADY'S STREET DRESS, 1884

# MUFFS AND MORALS

by

PEARL BINDER

author of

"ODD JOBS" ETC.

~~1087~~

*With eleven plates in half-tone  
and eighty-three illustrations in line by the author*

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PREFACE

THE secret of being a bore" said Voltaire, "is to tell everything."

In writing a book about dress, however, it is extremely difficult to decide what to leave out, all being so fascinating. For is not the story of dress the history of the world? I can only hope that readers may find the information I have gathered together at least entertaining, and that for students this book may prove a useful source of reference.

I have been fortunate in having for my mentors Mrs Langley Moore, from whose famous collection I have been permitted to draw many items; Mr James Laver, whose scholarship and kindness place all students in his debt, myself most of all; and Dr C. Willett Cunningham, whose collection (now housed in Manchester) and whose erudition are equally vast.

To these authorities, to the patient staffs of the British Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum; to the editors and staff of *Tailor and Cutter*, *Vogue*, *Picture Post*; to Messrs Gems, Ltd, Messrs Marshall and Snelgrove, Ltd, Messrs Jay's, Ltd, Messrs James Smith and Sons (Umbrellas), Ltd, Messrs Leggatt Brothers; to Gordon Lawrence for gallantly tracking down the reference to Dickens's whiskers; Geraldine Skynner for kind ministrations, Stanley Kissilevsky, Alfred Wurmser for photographing the picture of Sir Anthony Cope, Bart., my friend Sah Oved for her unfailing help and wisdom, and Christina Foyle for modelling her Stiebel evening gown; to my husband for his helpful criticism, to the thousand and one *bouquinistes* and owners of antique-shops and junk-shops where I have lingered and learned, I should like to say Thank you.

PEARL BINDER

During her residence in Turkey, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was invited to the Bath, where her Turkish hostess, as a high compliment, came to undress her. When she reached the stays her Turkish hostess cried out to the other ladies in the Bath, "Come hither and see how cruelly the poor English ladies are used by their husbands, You need boast indeed of the superior liberties allowed you, when they lock you up thus in a box."

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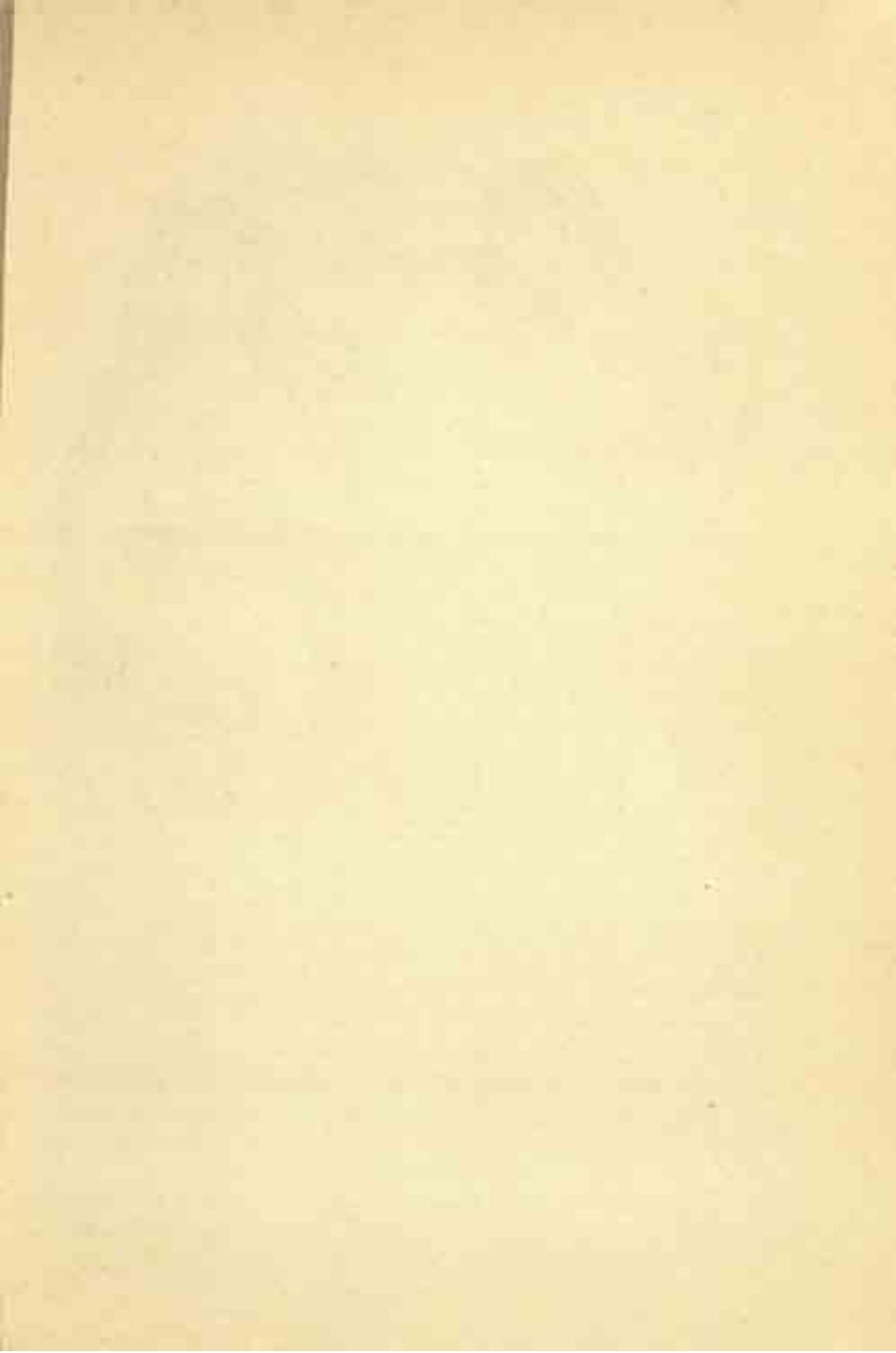
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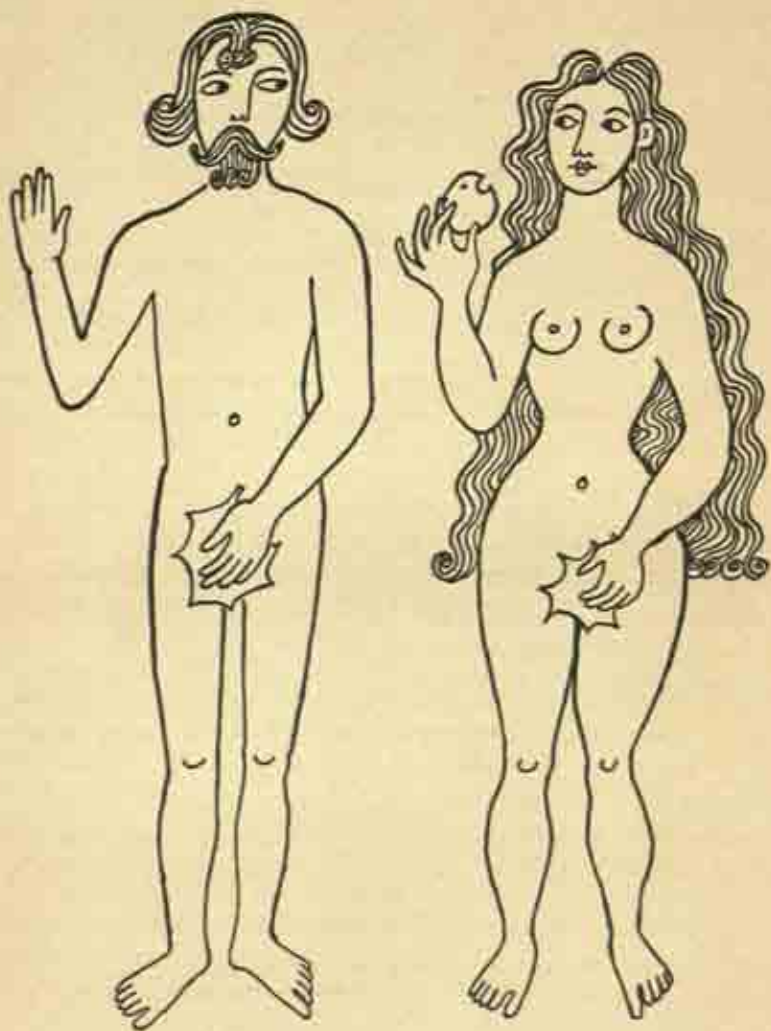
BRIGHTON ROYAL PAVILION, 1784-1827

MRS PATRICK CAMPBELL IN "BELLA DONNA," 1911

ORIENTAL EVENING TURBAN, 1828

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ADAM AND EVE  
After Mennling.

## CHAPTER ONE

### DECENCY AND INDECENCY IN DRESS

The horrible disordinate scantinesse of clothings that through there shortnesse do not covere the shamefulle members of man to wicked intente.

*A Priest (fourteenth century)*

ON any fashionable lido to-day a respectable woman may, without loss of reputation, wear a bathing-suit which exposes her navel, all her stomach, most of her bosom, and by far the greater part of her posterior. So much so that a long-established New York burlesque theatre, famed for its strip-tease acts, was recently obliged to close down for lack of customers. "Why should the boys pay to come here," complained the bankrupt proprietor, "when they can see a darned sight more for nothing on the nearest beach?"

In the matter of dress, decency and indecency are dependent upon geography and history. Primitive communities, where the influence of the white man has not yet penetrated, have no conception of what the Western world means by decency or modesty, because the naked body does not appear to them to be improper.

In tropical conditions, where covering is unnecessary, savages are careful to indicate social status by variety in hairdressing and ornament. There is evidence that status was thus shown in ancient Britain. Slaves were totally forbidden to adorn their bodies with any form of paint or tattooing. Freemen were permitted to use a certain amount of decoration, but the designs had to be small, scattered, and non-representational. Only the aristocracy were allowed the privilege of adorning their bodies with large paintings of animals. In time these paintings were transferred to their shields. According to some authorities, this is the true origin of coats of arms and heraldic devices.

Even where the severity of the climate makes warm clothing



essential, nudity and shame are not inseparable. Eskimos on entering their hot igloos remove all their fur clothing and sit about, eat, and work, men and women together without constraint, all totally naked.

The Ancients believed a woman's naked body to possess magic power over ocean tempests, and Pliny wrote, "A storm may be lulled by a woman uncovering her body out at sea." This may, indeed, be the relic of a still earlier practice of seeking to propitiate the angry gods by human sacrifice. It certainly offers an explanation of the custom of carving ships' figureheads in the form of a naked woman.

Whether the body of a woman possessed power over storms or not, the early Christian Church regarded it as highly dangerous, a continual invitation to sin. Woman must be covered up completely lest she lead man into wickedness. St Clement admonishes women to hide their faces in these words:

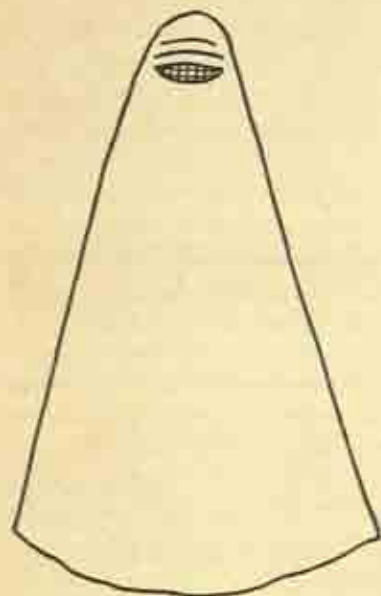
Let her wholly cover up her head unless perchance she be at home, for so dressed she will have respect and be withdrawn from gazing eyes. And if thus with modesty and with a veil she covereth her own eyes she shall neither be misled nor shall she draw others by the exposure of her face into the dangerous path of sin.

St Bernard rebuked his own sister for her attention to dress, denouncing "such pomp and pride to adorn a carrion as is your body."

A medieval book of etiquette, written by a bourgeois husband for his wife, advises her not only to take particular pains in the modest adjustment of her dress, but never to venture out of doors without the chaperonage of an honourable woman. He counsels her: "As you go bear your head upright and your eyelids low and without fluttering and look straight in front of you about four yards ahead without looking round at any man or woman to the right or to the left."

Mohammedans regard the mouth of a woman as improper, and good Muslim women always cover their mouths in public. In Uzbekistan this rule was carried to such extremes that all females over the age of ten were obliged to extinguish themselves out of doors by wearing the *paranchah*, a close-meshed bag of black

horsehair which shrouded the head and shoulders and looked like a coal-sack. When the penetration of Soviet Russian ideas of female emancipation encouraged some of the more daring among the Uzbek women to discard their *paranchahs*, fanatic mobs,



BURKA

Worn by Muslim women in Pakistan  
(contemporary).



PARANCHAH

Horsehair veil worn by Muslim  
women in Uzbekistan (up to  
1936).

instigated by outraged Mullahs, burned these women alive on public petrol fires for blasphemy. This took place as recently as 1930.

Every new style of dress was greeted by the Christian Church by loud denunciation. Laced openings to women's bodices were called "the Gates of Hell." The devil himself is depicted in trailing sleeves. A whole horde of little devils use men's pointed shoes for their chariots.



Women were threatened with eternal damnation, not for wearing too little, but for wearing too much. A fourteenth-century priest thundered, "As to the first sin, it is in superfluittee of garments that which maketh it so dere." The dresses were too long. They trailed in the mire. They used up too much material. Money was being wasted which should have gone to the Church. And what about the poor?

"Think ye not," demanded St Bernard, "of the por people that be deyen of hunger and of colde? and that for a sixth parte of youre gaye attire forty persons might be clothed, refreshed, and kepte from the colde?"

If fashionable women were guilty of wearing too much, the young gallants of the Middle Ages were equally upbraided for wearing too little. Endless sumptuary laws were enacted with the object of making the women wear less and the men more clothing. But without effect. The Church thereupon ordained that, since men refused to dress decently, the improper fashions must be confined to the nobility, lest the stability of the established order of society be threatened. (See Chapter VIII.)

A fine, for instance, of twenty shillings could be exacted from a man *not protected by his rank* who ventured to wear a doublet "not long enough when he stands upright to cover his privities and his buttocks." The tailor also risked a fine and the confiscation of the offending garment.

In the *Chronicle of Saint Denis* (1370) the impropriety of male attire is thus described:

... the immodesty of certain of their garments, so short as scarcely to reach the buttocks and which, when the wearer stoops down, reveals his breeks and what is inside them to those standing behind; and by the same token these garments are so tight that help is essential both for dressing and for undressing and when taken off it looks like skinning.

The failure of the Church's campaign is revealed by the complaint of Jacques Duclercq, who as late as 1467 declared that men were wearing their dress so short that they might as well go naked, and that even the shop-boys aped the nobility in their dress.

The Church did indeed succeed in establishing certain accessories of modesty both for men and women. But these very proprieties rapidly developed into abominations. For instance, the veil, the wimple, the cod-piece. The early Christian Church believed that the Virgin Mary had conceived through the ear. Female ears must therefore be covered up like a sexual organ. The wimple was introduced. A woman's hair, it was understood, must be provocative. Therefore hair must be hidden from sight.

But the chaste appearance of the female face, closely framed in white linen, not a hair showing, suggested by its very modesty a new kind of vanity. More white linen. Much more. Very much more. Less and less hair. A fetish of hairlessness. The eyebrows began to be plucked out and the forehead artificially heightened to produce the coveted fragile egg-face so esteemed at the height of the Middle Ages.

White linen, no longer a simple covering, soared, swelled, and flapped into monstrous headdresses against which new sumptuary laws were enacted in vain. In France middle-class women were strictly forbidden to wear hennins more than two feet high. Ladies of the nobility, of course, might wear theirs as high as they desired. In England similar edicts were introduced without the slightest result. Chaucer relates that the Wife of Bath wore over ten pounds' weight of starched linen on her head on Sundays, presumably to show her contempt for the clergy.

Extreme forms of these various exaggerated headdresses were introduced into the convents by the unmarried ladies of good family, who took up residence there (as common a practice then as it is to-day for them to take up residence in comfortable hotels in Kensington). Thus introduced to the fashionable mode, the nuns themselves succumbed. To-day in the streets of London we see in the headdress of the good sisters of the Order of St Vincent and St Paul the very fashion against which the Church once raised its mighty voice. At first regarded as an outrage, these enormous starched headdresses, tardily and reluctantly accepted by the Church, have become a symbol of pious charity.

The Catholic Church carefully supervised all human activities in order to censure those pleasures which might become too



earthly and therefore too great a distraction from matters spiritual. Even musical notations was rigorously scrutinized for hidden danger. Sixths, for instance, were sternly forbidden as provocative intervals liable to provoke sexual excitement.

The Vatican to-day appears to be moving towards a more contemporary outlook, at least in certain sartorial matters. The twenty-foot-long Cardinal's cope is being reduced to half its length, and Pope Pius XII (in September 1952) even went so far as to give his permission for nuns to modernize their sweeping medieval habits. Since then dress-designers in Italy and America have been busy planning new costumes for nuns to wear, not merely incorporating the papal "changes suggested by reason and charity," but positively modish. Italian nuns, exercising their feminine privilege for the first time in a thousand years, have chosen designs for dresses which could not be worn without the aid of a fashionable corset underneath. In America Hattie Carnegie's svelte gown designed for the nuns of the Society of Christ our King could be worn equally well for a smart cocktail party.

We may ask ourselves why His Holiness has altered sumptuary laws of such venerable antiquity. What exactly is meant by "reason and charity"? Is the object of this sartorial indulgence to prevent the nuns from standing out among their lay sisters? Whereas the former nuns' habits, with their mysterious trailing robes and hidden hair, were undeniably alluring to our modern eyes (has not Hollywood found it profitable to star several of their highest-paid actresses in the rôle of nuns?), henceforth presumably nuns will pass completely unnoticed in the streets of our cities, showing their legs, their hair, and the shape of their bodies like other women. And this may in the end actively impede recruitment to the convents. For those uncomfortably large white linen headdresses were never intended for ease, but for a sign of singularity, dedication, penance, voluntary discomfort for a higher purpose.

The size and weight of such medieval headdresses necessitated wearing a special cap underneath to give purchase and a loop in front for adjustment. This practical loop, sometimes known as a 'calotte' or 'bongrace' after its headdress, at once became a further subject for coquettish extravagance and called forth further

sumptuary laws for its social regulation. Ladies whose estates were valued at less than ten pounds a year were forbidden a bon-grace of black velvet. Only ladies of the nobility might wear gold ones. Laws which proved as feeble as the rest of the sumptuary laws. In portraits of this period it is unwise to judge the exact social rank by the dress, for often enough the lady is dressed above her station.

The extreme popularity of veils led to a great deal of legislation concerning the precise length and width each class should be permitted. The original intention of a modest covering was utterly ignored in the bickering for social recognition. The longest veils were reserved for ladies of the nobility.

The Church was instrumental in the introduction of the 'cod-piece,' which began as a modest accessory to male dress. The Wife of Bath frankly admits that it was the handsome legs of the gallant she chose for her fifth husband which attracted her as she walked behind the bier of her fourth. The male leg was as potent an allure in the fourteenth century as the female leg in 1926, and they both had to be long and elegantly slender.

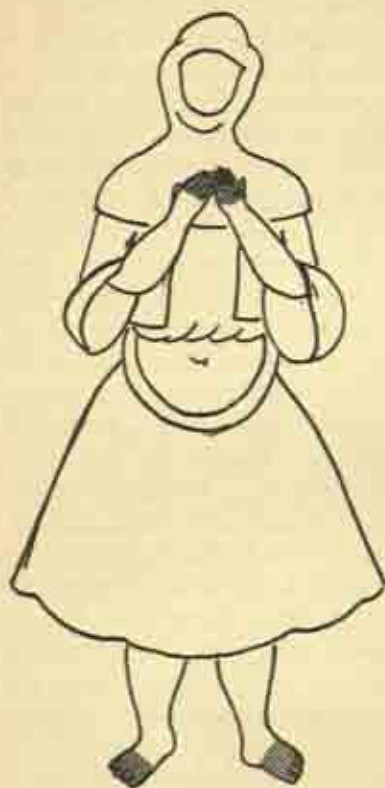
The clinging hose of the Middle Ages—at first donned as two separate stockings, which later were joined and extended to the waist—proved extremely revealing. Fines and execration having no effect, and the doublet continuing to be worn shorter and shorter, the Church stepped in and ordered the introduction of the cod-piece to cover the front fold, much as the Pope to-day has had fig-leaves clapped on to all the Vatican male statues. In both cases, instead of serving as a modest concealment, it merely focused the attention.

The cod-piece, which began as a neat pouch, was known as a brayette or braguette, and lasted from its introduction in 1450 for well over a hundred years, going through every variety of fanciful form all over Europe. It is an interesting aspect of our present-day prudery that we now regard the cod-piece as so indecent that it is hardly ever mentioned at all in costume books of our time, though it was an essential part of male dress and figures prominently in all portraits of the period, and was even introduced into armour. (See next chapter.)

Though their sleeves were cut long enough to cover the second



finger-joint, ladies of the late Middle Ages not infrequently wore their bodices cut down as low as the waist-belt. Tudor citizens regarded an exposed female bosom as a sign of virginity, and a young girl in her early teens assumed a high closed bodice as a



PERSIAN SERVANT-GIRL (1880)

Note Henna on hands and feet.

matter of status when she married, while spinsters continued to wear low-cut bodices regardless of their age. Queen Elizabeth I went on wearing extremely décolleté gowns until she was a withered old woman, not for coquetry, but for reasons of State, to demonstrate her maidenhood.

The deeply décolleté evening dresses worn by young girls in the middle of the nineteenth century were inspired by the same idea, especially as they were almost invariably white, another token of virginity. It is perhaps significant that excessively low-cut bodices, though they have from time to time caused a protest from the pulpit, have excited less angry comment than other excesses. Perhaps because men prefer women to wear garments which stress their female attributes. Villamont

in 1607 wrote of the Venetian ladies' street attire being cut so low as to reveal "shoulders and breasts, which they display almost to the stomach." But he was much more scandalized by their stilt shoes, which raised them "at least a foot higher than the men."

Tudor women not infrequently wore bodices cut so low as to reveal the nipples, a fashion which recurred in the eighteenth century, but decency at the same time forbade the slightest glimpse of the female arm, closely hidden in Tudor fashions down to the wrist and in the eighteenth century to the elbow.

In our own times we have seen the growing popularity of very low-cut evening dresses, intended to display the entire length of arms and the shoulders as well as the bosom. It is not a new fashion, but a revival of a mode of the nineties, when women were several stones plumper and did not need the softening addition of the net scarf required by our less well-fed age.

The first exposure of the forearm, considered at the time a daring departure from decency, began timidly enough in the reign of Charles I, when it was bitterly attacked by the Puritans. The mode developed with the Restoration, and the beauties of the Court of Charles II made much play with their graceful wrists and rounded white forearms emerging from a carefully arranged abandon of heavy drapery. But even in this licentious Court the upper arm was still kept closely covered.

Fashion, like Nature, establishes her own balances. When something is taken away from one section of dress something additional springs up in another section. Thus the introduction of masks coincided with the general adoption of low-cut bodices. As early as 1540 Venetian ladies began wearing masks made from a mere square of gauze. Possibly the mode began as a gesture of modesty, but this was not of long duration. Soon masks were the rage and were being worn in endless styles and materials. Vigilant sumptuary laws were introduced which attempted to confine, for instance, the wearing of black velvet masks to the nobility only. Masks were used by both sexes for secrecy, for coquetry, and also to protect the complexion. They covered the entire face and were held on by a silver or glass button inside, which was held between the teeth like a bit.

Cervantes, in *Don Quixote*, mentioned in 1604 that the two monks of the Order of St Benedict riding along the road on mules wore riding-masks to protect their faces from dust. The black Loo mask (derived from *loup*, 'wolf'; something frightening) was such a complexion mask.

The exposure of women's feet has caused more uproar in history than the exposure of any other part of the body. It was not until the time of Queen Elizabeth I that women's skirts began, and then only occasionally, to reveal a glimpse of their shoes. (Of course, peasant women working in the fields and the servants of richer people have been obliged to tuck up their petticoats for work at all periods.) But the mode was not well established, and disappeared again until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

A scandalized gentleman wrote to the *Guardian* in 1713: "The sex at the same time they are letting down their stays are tucking up their petticoats, which grow shorter and shorter every day. The leg discovers itself in proportion to the neck." What he describes as leg was no more than an inch or so of ankle.

Sir John Suckling had already dwelt on the fascination afforded by a chance glimpse of hidden feet. Early in the seventeenth century he had written the well-known lines:

Her feet beneath her petticoat,  
Like little mice, stole in and out  
As if they feared the light.

This charming sentiment on examination suggests nothing but horror to us to-day when mice are associated with squalor and disease and the average size of Englishwomen's shoes is 6 to 6½.

The longer the skirts the greater the obsession with feet. It was the dancer Camargo who first introduced, in 1726, a ballet dress which ended a few inches off the ground. The popularity of the romantic ballet a century later affected dress, footwear, and sentiment alike. Filmy layers of gauze permitting a veiled glimpse of a few inches of leg; tiny feet, so narrow as to be useless for pedestrian purposes—this was the ideal.

The white stockings which had caused such a tornado of opposition upon their introduction into England in the reign of George II, did not become general until early in the nineteenth century. The Pope had permitted tights to be worn on the stage, but only on condition that they were dyed blue so that they should not suggest bare flesh. Before Queen Victoria had been long on the throne there was a renewed outcry against white stockings. They were denounced as indecent, immoral, and



profligate. White stockings would not do. They looked like bare legs. From then on stockings were coloured, or, better still, striped. The striped bars at the top of children's socks to-day are relics of the striped hose of prudence worn all over Europe a century ago. The ban was slow to depart, and it was not until after the 1914-18 War that a few daring women timidly began to wear lighter stockings than black or brown.

Women entered the First World War and took an active part in it in skirts which touched the ground. The Victorian foot fetish is a cult we find it difficult to understand to-day, when women's feet, no longer hidden, excite no furtive glances. In the sixties of the last century a woman's feet were looked upon as so indecent that reputable family photographers preferred to erase the feet of their lady clients from their negatives and print them looking as though the lady in the photograph were floating in the air.

This is the period when loose covers began to be made for the furniture, not to keep the upholstery clean as we do to-day, but to conceal the offensive legs beneath a flounce. Piano legs were similarly petticoated.

It is interesting to trace in the novels of Dickens the gradual change from the coy reference to ladies' shoes in the earliest books to the frozen propriety in the last. In *The Pickwick Papers* (written in the thirties) he writes with obvious enjoyment of

the young ladies who wouldn't come over the style while he looked—or who, having pretty feet and unexceptionable ankles, preferred standing on the top rail for five minutes or so, declaring they were too frightened to move. . . .

He is careful to describe how the black-eyed lady guest is wearing "a very nice little pair of boots with fur round the top."

Accompanying the nineteenth-century foot fetish was a steady rage for china and brass ornaments in the shape of shoes and boots. These sold readily as rather saucy gifts, and can to-day be found by the dozen in every curiosity shop. In their day they were considered audacious.

No matter how fashions change there is one article of female dress which all European women to-day regard as essential for



decency. Knickers, drawers, pants—their various names show how they would appear to have been borrowed from male garments. Sometimes they are called bloomers, after the American social reformer who introduced reformed dress rather prematurely in 1851 and earned little but derision for her trouble, as is the way with most reformers.

Drawers for women made their appearance about 1800. They were regarded then as utterly depraved, unnatural and vicious, a corrupting assumption of masculinity, another fearsome result of the terrible French Revolution. But even Paris hesitated to adopt this new style, though the current mode of dress was flimsier and more revealing than any other mode in history. "Excepté les actrices," Mercier was careful to note, "les Parisiennes ne portent point de caleçon." And actresses in France had for long been looked upon as too impure to be allowed Christian burial, but had to be buried instead in unhallowed ground like criminals, a practice against which Voltaire had protested vehemently.

The transparency of Regency dress, the clinging folds of which were frequently damped to make the muslin cling to the figure better, was rarely mitigated by drawers, in England at least. We may be sure that Jane Austen's heroines did not wear them. It took half a century to persuade English ladies that drawers might be worn without grave offence to their womanly decency.

Lady Chesterfield daringly mentioned, in a letter written in 1850, "these comfortable garments borrowed from the other sex and which we all wear but none of us talk about." By then Society, always in the vanguard in such matters, had taken to wearing drawers. It needed another ten years before the middle classes would accept them, and they were not commonly worn by what were then called the 'lower classes' until as late as 1880. These drawers were made of calico, very long, gathered into a waistband and tying with intricate tapes. They opened at the back. When woollen drawers were introduced by Jaeger's in the eighties they were considered to be extremely daring and only to be ventured by the unwomanly 'new woman.'

Curiously enough, drawers had been introduced into England once before. The experiment had already been tried and had failed ignominiously at the Court of Charles II. It is not difficult

to imagine the libertine monarch dismissing these new-fangled garments for other reasons than impropriety.

Pantalettes (more properly called 'pantaloons') were quite a different garment from drawers, and were part of the Victorian 'loose cover' complex. Usually worn by children, whose shorter skirts would otherwise have revealed some inches of dreaded leg, these pantalettes were tied with tapes at the knee. The upper part of the leg often remained bare beneath the various layers of petticoats.

Hands were looked upon as only one degree less improper than feet by middle-class English women in Victorian England. Hands had to be kept closely gloved indoors as well as out. Gloves were ladylike and showed that their wearer did not have to work for a living. In *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott (in the sixties) shows clearly that democratic America thought the same way too. Of all the items of dress the two young ladies Meg and Jo March regard as essential for the party the most important one is their gloves. Gogol, in *Dead Souls*, has a lot of fun at the expense of fat *petit bourgeois* women squeezing their big hands into tight gloves.

Gloves stood firmly for gentility. A ladies' magazine of etiquette pointed out that Queen Victoria herself always set a good example by wearing black kid gloves for everyday indoor wear and white kid gloves for Court functions. When the first daring vanguard of the young women who desired education began to attend classes at college, it was on the strict understanding that



TURKISH DANCER (1880)



they were always to be accompanied by a chaperon and that they never appeared in class without gloves.

"Gloves," advises a ladies' journal in 1840, "are always graceful for a lady in the house except at meals." At meals mittens were worn instead.

It has taken thousands of years of evolution to bring to-day's possibility of freedom from headgear. More young women in our time do not wear a hat than those who do, a situation which the hat industry views with alarm and which it is strenuously trying to combat by means of posters in tube-trains and buses, pointing out hopefully that ladies wearing hats are more seductive than those without.

It is only in our present century that women have begun not to wear some form of headgear all the time, indoors and out, by daytime and night-time. In the nineteenth century men wore nightcaps as well as women. Older women went on wearing caps indoors, fancy confections of lace and ribbon, until the beginning of 1900. These caps gradually became smaller and smaller, ending in a mere frill of lace. Servants' caps are a relic of ladies' indoor caps, an example of servants' uniform copying the normal dress their employers wore in the preceding period. To-day it is still the custom for ladies to wear their hats indoors when lunching out.

The bustle, which was fashionable for twenty years, was an attempt to exaggerate, bushman-like, the female posterior, until in the eighties it appeared to stand out sharply behind, like a shelf. A ladies' journal of the seventies speaks enthusiastically of "that contour which is universally considered a great beauty in the female form."

Its effect was still further enhanced by drawing the dress backward tightly over the hips and stomach so that the wearer walked in front of her vast protuberance, like a snail carrying its shell behind. Such was the costume in which advanced ladies played tennis, skated, and went for select walking tours with other ladies similarly attired.

Alice went through the looking-glass, aged seven or so, in a proper bustle. Kipling, in his autobiography, recalls that his seven-year-old little sister was clapped into a patent bustle the

moment she came to England from India. It was the respectable, the only decent wear. No woman who had the least feeling for propriety (and that included every woman, even the prostitutes) dared wear anything else. It was well into the eighties before a few revolutionary æsthetic ladies abandoned their bustles and went about in sad-hued, shapeless dresses, wore no corsets, and were heartily abused in *Punch*.

The steatopygous bustle was one way of drawing attention to the posterior. Another way was the evening mode of the 1930's, bare-backed to the waist and very tight over the behind. This mode reached its climax in 1939, was worn during the War by ladies not in uniform, and, indeed, for a considerable time after the War by those who had no coupons to buy anything else. In this style, the emphasis was as much on the posterior of the dress as before, but instead of appearing larger than nature the ideal was to look as small and flat as a boy, a continuation of the boy-cult of the twenties.

Corsets in the 1920's concentrated on reducing the hips, ignored the waist, and clamped the loins and thighs into a narrow tube. The slightest curve in the rear was looked upon with horror, and many ladies in and out of Society made themselves ill by dieting to the point of starvation in pursuit of the extreme hipless, bottomless figure that the mode demanded.

To-day, though breasts and hips are once more in fashion, the posterior is still inadmissible, and present-day corsets are designed to flatten the buttocks. At the same time, these corsets throw out the hips, so that they give an hour-glass effect seen from the front and a tube effect from the side.

The French Revolutionaries, believing they were creating a totally new society, not only renamed the calendar months, but deliberately created new fashions to suit their new ideas. The painter David was commissioned to design new libertarian garments suitable to the new era. David produced designs copied closely from Ancient Greek friezes, requiring the abandonment of all underwear to give the effect of simple drapery over nakedness.

Drapery was the clue to the new mode which Paris adopted with enthusiasm. M. Maillot's tights (he had invented them for



the theatre) might be worn off the stage by those who did not feel quite equal to wearing nothing at all under the flimsy new muslins which steadily grew more and more transparent. Pink tights, or better still white tights, were worn by every female of fashion. Drawers would have shocked them. Tights did not.

"Pas une grisette," says Mercier, "qui ne se décore pas le dimanche d'une robe athenienne et qui se ramène sur le bras droit des plis pendants pour se dessiner à l'antique ou du moins égaler Vénus Callipyge."

He found it a disturbing fashion. "In this sylph-like attire," he complains, "they run about from morning to night. One sees nothing but white ghosts in the streets." And he went on to grumble that the misses of 1800 did nothing at all but waste time, read romances, and dance.

And the preferred dance of the new century was the waltz—the lascivious, shocking waltz. Previously dancing partners had been held apart by at least the length of an arm. The waltz drew them together in an embrace which horrified not a few, the libertine Lord Byron for one. He wrote a satirical poem on the subject.

From where the garb just leaves the bosom free,  
That spot where hearts were once supposed to be,  
Round all the confines of the yielded waist  
The stranger's hand may wander undisplaced.

Who could be expected to resist such temptation, he wondered?

The breast thus publicly resigned to man  
In private may resist him if it can.

What would the Oriental think of us, moreover?

Till some might marvel with the modest Turk  
If 'nothing follows all this palming work'?

And of course the ladies were showing too much.

Not Cleopatra on her galley's deck  
Displayed so much of leg or more of neck.

A book of etiquette published in 1855, while not ruling out the waltz entirely, suggests "doubtless it should be engaged in with caution by all sensitive organisms," and recommends turning out the toes at an angle of 45 degrees.

The would-be-Greek young ladies of 1800 who damped their white muslin draperies before putting them on, the better to cling, were rapidly followed by their beaux, who equally damped their new-fangled pantaloons so that they might dry on the limbs fashionably tight. And fashionably tight meant too tight for comfort. It meant skin-tight.

It is true that Greek and Roman male dress was impossible for nineteenth-century gallants to wear, no matter how staunchly Republican their principles. Yet they too contrived in their own manner to resemble classical statues.

Typical of the post-French-Revolutionary mode for men, and for a long time after all over Europe, were skin-tight trousers, frequently white, always light-coloured, extending smoothly in an unbroken line from breast to ankle. When they were worn with top-boots the wearer, it was thought, might well pass for a Greek warrior. These white trousers (tight would be nearer the word) gave a startlingly naked look, which was accentuated by the cut



RAMGANNY, OR DANCING-GIRL.

"Employed in Hindu Temples and for natives of distinction. The attitudes or gestures, which are sometimes graceful, are almost always indecent and therefore disgusting, their general object being to excite desire. At houses of natives or Europeans they are always attended by a matron who has herself been of the profession."—*Costumes of Hindustan* (1789).

of the jacket, breast-high in front to elongate the long line of the leg.

It was a fashion only becoming to a young man with a perfectly formed body. Yet such trousers, overtight and white, were worn by every male, old and young, tall and short, thin and fat. The drawings of Rowlandson show the effect of a roomful of gentlemen in such trousers to be preposterous, ludicrous. The portly Mr Pickwick considered them suitable wear for his age and girth. And, of course, the seventeen-stone Prince Regent, who despite stays had an unenviable waistline, wore the same as his subjects. The battle of Waterloo was fought in such white garments, too tight to allow proper manœuvring. Fortunately, both sides wore them.

In 1927 the females of the Western world were wearing shorter skirts than ever before in all recorded history. Interest was focussed on legs as passionately as a quarter of a century previously it had been on ankles. Legs in 1927 had to be very long and extremely slender. 'Boyish,' 'like a page,' were the greatest compliments it was possible to pay to a lady, particularly a lady of advanced age who, in order to achieve such coveted angularity, was obliged to undertake a penance of exercise and diet. The narrow oblong dress looked like a tube of aspirin, stoppered at the top by the cloche hat fitting down tightly over the eyes like a cork.

The clergy were alarmed. It was bad enough when women flaunted their sex by wearing sexually provocative clothes. But these women were trying not to look like women at all, but like the opposite sex. The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah went up from every pulpit in the country.

Dressmakers were equally in despair. No skill was required to run up the shapeless pillow-case that the mode dictated, and most young ladies made their own frocks. In an effort to put their trade on its feet, elaborately beaded and sequined models were launched for evening wear; still pillow-cases, for nothing, while the style lasted, could wean women from the tube shape. The young women retaliated by not wearing evening dress at all, but a silk shawl instead and nothing else. It was tightly wrapped round the body under the arms, Burmese-fashion, and flung over one shoulder.



For more than four years at this period the female bosom was considered highly undesirable, improper, indecent. Those unfortunates handicapped by natural curves compressed themselves into oblong corsets specially designed to flatten out the breasts and squeeze in the hips so as to give a straight line from shoulder to feet.

Many comfortable grandmothers to-day look back with amusement to the time when they and the century were both in their mid-twenties and the chief qualification for a fiancée was to appear to have nothing wherewith to nourish future offspring.

To-day the womanly ideal is still to be slender, but violent curves are required at bust and hips. We have become more prudish than our ancestors regarding men's clothes, but less prudish regarding women's clothes. Not only are the most intimate items of female underwear lavishly advertised in every newspaper and displayed in shop windows, but for sale alongside them are artificial breasts in all sizes, the latest ones pneumatic. Modern brassières are guaranteed to mould the breast to particular requirements and at the same time to clamp them into any desired position.

"Perfect separation," promises a current advertisement; "adjustable shoulder-straps and the three-way lift from underneath."

The midriff mode which came in just before the Second World War was a style taken from, and which soon returned to, the bathing beach. It shocked nobody. To-day there would appear to be little more to reveal which has not already been tried. We are difficult to shock—at least, as far as women's dress is concerned. So we come to nudism, a modern cult which its disciples claim is healthy, inexpensive, and hurts no one. For sumptuary laws are a thing of the past; and the English are inclined to regard nudism indulgently as an amiable eccentricity, though the British climate turns it into a Spartan ordeal.

On dusty shelves in old-fashioned drapers' shops it is still sometimes possible to stumble across lace oblongs eight inches by six. They date from 1912, when the first timid lowering of the previously high-necked blouse brought a flood of indignant protest and many a lady, rather than violate her *pudeur* by wearing the fashionable but improper V-neck, bought and inserted a lace gorget like this to restore the *status quo*. It was known as a 'modesty.'



## CHAPTER TWO

### MALE COQUETRY

A coxcomb, a fop, a dainty milk-sop  
Who, essenced and dizeden from bottom to top,  
Looks just like a doll for a milliner's shop.  
A thing full of prate and pride and conceit  
All fashion no weight  
Who shrugs and takes snuff, and carries a muff,  
A minnikin, finicking French powder-puff.

*A description of a dandy (1768)*



FOP'S EYEBROW COMB

English eighteenth century.

JUST as the jackdaw delights in adorning its nest with glittering objects, so early man, long before he took to wearing the skins of animals, decorated his body with bright flowers and daubed himself with paint. The flowers were to make himself more beautiful, the paint to awe his friends and to frighten his enemies. Among the earliest prehistoric finds are red and black colours ground into powder, which, mixed with animal fat, adhered to the body.

Thus male dress in its development has combined these two elements of coquetry and dignity. Sometimes (as in the aristocratically abbreviated tunics worn in the reign of Edward IV) coquetry triumphs over dignity. At other times (as in the long Oriental male robe or the impressive long Tudor gown worn by older men) dignity prevails over coquetry. Not infrequently both elements are present at the same period (as in the fourteenth-

century short tunics and long gowns), and even in the same dress. (Chaucer's Squire wore a short tunic with long hanging sleeves. Modern male evening dress displays at the back long tails and sombre colour, at the front a frivolously exiguous white waistcoat.)

Anthropologists assure us that dandies are as frequently found among primitive peoples as in more civilized communities. The primitive Australian male aborigines wear a fan-shaped fur-string pubic tassel no larger than a five-shilling piece. Not for protection. Still less for propriety. But for decoration. Dyak dandies delight in the nice adjustment of the fourteen yards of material required for their loin-cloths.

Nor were men less devoted to dress in ancient times. The earliest Babylonian male wrappers were artfully arranged in spiral folds which needed thirty feet of material a yard wide, as examples found in tombs have proved. A tailor's bill carved on a chalk tablet found in Chaldea demands payment for ninety-two robes and tunics—of which fourteen were more expensive than the rest, being perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cassia.

The priests of the ancient Hebrews believed dress and morality to be inseparable, and therefore set their faces against any change in the mode. They raised an outcry in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, for instance, against the import of Greek caps, fearful lest their young men might at the same time import Greek ideas on morality.

There seems to be some basis for their fear. When Africans abandon their own gods for Christianity they adopt the white man's dress too, or as much of it as they can afford. To take a nearer example, English youths who swagger about in oversized American-styled jackets of sky-blue gaberdine and chequered cowboy shirts also like to drink Coca-cola and mouth American slang.

A correspondent from Plymouth wrote to his Sunday newspaper in July 1952:

I recently watched an open-air dance on Plymouth Hoe. Jive was the order of the day. Youths in gaudy American-style shirts joined forces with girls who appeared to be wearing father's trousers chopped off below the knee. The ensuing contortions were

remarkable to behold, and facial expressions during the gyrations would make the late Lon Chaney look a novice. All this within the shadow of Drake's statue!

A national culture is a close-packed jigsaw pattern. Altering one piece may cause its total disintegration.

The highly sophisticated Egyptians used more cosmetics than any other ancient peoples, and Egyptian men painted their eyebrows and all round their eyes with antimony. Roman men also used make-up. Petronius poked fun at a young gallant whose facial paint had melted in the heat and run down to his chin.

Egyptian dandies of the Middle Kingdom originated a new form of coquetry when they began wearing a long skirt of transparent material over the customary loin-cloth. The wearing of shoes was an indication of rank, and a man of distinction took care to be followed by a special slave whose duty it was to carry his master's sandals round his neck in a bag. The Pharaoh wore State slippers of pure gold, painted on the inside sole with pictures of Egypt's three traditional enemies—Nubian, Syrian, and Libyan—so that in walking he crushed his foes beneath his feet.

Waist-tightening, one of the oldest forms of coquetry, has been used quite as often by men as by women. Dandies in Port Moresby (New Guinea) use tight-lacing to achieve a small waist. In Crete men belted in their single garment extremely tightly to make themselves wasp-waisted. Aristophanes ridiculed the Greek poet Cinesias for pulling in his waist by means of a corset fashioned from small wooden planks. A precisely similar corset was later worn by Antoninus Pius without arousing particular comment.

The narrow waist so typical of fifteenth-century male dress in Europe was not achieved without merciless pinching. Gallants in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I achieved a small waist both by wearing tight metal corsets beneath their doublet and by lavish bombasting both above and below the waist to emphasize its smallness. During the greater part of the nineteenth century it was considered handsome for a man to be elegantly narrow in the middle, and corsets were much more commonly worn by men than is generally supposed. Most of the portraits of Albert,



the Prince Consort, who, if not popular with the British public, was certainly considered the *bel homme* of his day, depict him with a waist as narrow as a girl's.

Any garment which adds to height is intended to increase dignity, whether the extra height is obtained by adding to the headdress (as in the bearskin hat of our Guards regiments, a purely ceremonial military headdress which would be impossible to fight in, and even during the limited exertion of summer parades often causes the wearer to faint from its weight and oppression) or obtained by lengthening the gown. The length of the gown is sometimes so exaggerated for the sake of aggrandisement that all movement becomes impossible. Royal trains, for example. Similarly, long fingernails, such as were cultivated by Chinese potentates of the old school, demonstrate that the wearer need not stir because he had many servants to do his bidding.

The top-hat, though we are too used to it for it to excite awe in us to-day, is a strong assertion of pride and dignity. And it is worth noting that African carvings of nineteenth-century missionaries always exaggerate the ecclesiastical top-hat, symbolic to the African of the white man's power. To-day top-hats are only worn on occasions requiring the display of particular dignity, such as weddings, funerals, royal garden-parties.

The vertical Gothic ideal of the Middle Ages was expressed in elegantly long sleeves trailing the ground, elegantly long legs revealed by close-fitting tights in brilliant colours, elongated hats, fantastically long-toed shoes.

The enormously long false sleeves were called 'pokeys,' and



HELMET OF THE EMPEROR  
CHARLES V

Made in Milan in the  
sixteenth century.

upon them much ingenuity and splendour were lavished. Those whose rank and wealth permitted the expenditure, and not a few who could lay claim to neither, had them made up in sumptuous materials, jagged into a thousand fanciful shapes, and embroidered all over with devices, musical motifs, and mottoes. Edward III ordered different mottoes for each set of sleeves, exquisitely worked in gold thread and jewels. One pair of sleeves bore this distich:

Hay! Hay! The whythe swan,  
By God's soul I am the man.

The sleeves contained so much more material than the abbreviated tunic that there was much more scope for decoration on the sleeves. Pointed or piked shoes came to England with the Norman Conquest. A Norman knight, nicknamed *Le Cornadu* from his fanciful piked shoes, wore the toes thereof very long, stuffed with tow, and curled upward into ram's horns. Throughout the Middle Ages the pikes of shoes grew steadily longer and longer until it was necessary, if the wearer were to walk at all, for the toes to be chained up. Dandies chose such chains in gold and silver and wore them fastened to the knee. These "devil's claws, snouted and piked," were the subject of many special sumptuary laws.

At the other extreme, hoods were worn with immensely long ends trailing five feet or more, until elegants solved the problem of what to do with all this modish superfluity by winding the liripipe twice or thrice round their necks before allowing the end to dangle.

Royal processions, particularly coronations, in the Middle Ages were marked by spreading the streets with rich cloths, especially between Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey. These costly cloths were allowed to be taken home by the public once the procession had passed. So violent were the battles for a snatch of the finery that spectators were regularly killed in the press after every procession.

In 1400 a German fancy swept Europe. This was a craze for sewing bells on to all parts of the dress, essentially a male fashion, although the fine lady at Banbury Cross in the nursery rhyme with



bells on her toes was only exercising her aristocratic privilege to wear what she liked. Tinkling bells were sewn round the borders of pourpoints, all along baldricks, round garters, on hats, and wired to stand out from embroidered belts. It is from this period that the traditional three-cornered jester's cap can be dated, two asses' ears being added to the customary pointed hood.

William Staunton, in the year 1409, wrote down his fearful vision of the fate of the proud in purgatory, wherein the jags in dandies' clothes turned into adders, and gallants who sported tinkling silver bells on their tunics had burning nails of fire driven through each bell.

The peculiar hall-mark of the dandy, at all times and in all countries, has been a preoccupation with the smooth fitting of his dress. Pueblo Indians used to make their moccasins carefully to measure by steeping the cut skins in wet sand to soften the leather, after which they were moulded on to the feet and allowed to dry—a device later followed by the Regency bucks who, as we have said, put on their buckskin pantaloons wet in order that they might dry tightly fitting the shape of the legs.

This anxiety for a smooth fit was by no means always related to the natural shape of the body. The shape of doublets and trunks in the time of Queen Elizabeth I was entirely different from the human form, the natural male structure being ignored and a smooth, totally false shape built up over it by artifice. The neck was completely hidden inside the stiffly starched ruff, separating head from body like "*le chef de Saint Jean dans un plat*." The shoulders were elevated by means of padded rolls and extended by wired wings. The hips and thighs were distorted into vast pumpkins (known by the time of James I as the "great round abominable breech") on account of which special seats had to be installed in the House of Commons before Members of Parliament could take their places at all. The normal flat stomach of the healthy male was at the same time padded out into the monstrous "peascod-belly." Having no foundation in nature, this false belly was contrived by bombasting over a whalebone or wooden framework, with old rags, bran, sawdust, and tow.

A gallant needed six pounds of bombast at least to make up his peascod-belly, and the slightest shower of rain was disastrous. So

was the accidental catching of his garment on a nail, such as happened to one unfortunate courtier just as he was advancing to make his reverence to the Queen, the chaff with which he was so proudly stuffed escaping in a twinkling, leaving him completely deflated. What the peascod-belly looked like we may see from the traditional costume of Mr Punch.

Wrote the moralist Philip Stubbes in *The Anatomie of Abuses*:

Their dublettes are no less monstrous than the reste. For nowe the fashion is to have them hange downe in the middel of their theighes or at least to their privy members, being so hard-quilted and stuffed bombasted and sewed as they can verie hardly either stoup downe or decline themselves on the grounde so styffe and sturdy they stande aboute them.



POP WITH MUFF

After Hogarth's *Taste in High Life*.  
English eighteenth century.

But to be stiff and sturdy was the object of such dress. Good patriot that he was, Stubbes blamed the mode on to the Italians. Peascod-bellies were too modish to be discouraged by satire, however, and the fashion lingered on for a long time. The Puritan General Ireton, who married Oliver Cromwell's daughter Bridget, fought the Civil War in peascod-bellied armour, as may be seen from his portrait in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

King James I, who was afraid of assassination "by the stilete," encouraged bombasting by prolonging the mode in his own clothes.

What tailors mean to-day by 'fit' is relatively modern in conception and dates back no further than the Regency. In the



eighteenth century, though there was always a lot of talk of fit, the art had not been invented, and tailors were afraid to cut into the gorgeous materials, but instead padded the coat for smoothness and wired the skirts of the coat to stand out stylishly. That is why eighteenth-century male dress appears to us now so bulky for all its elegance. Elegants affected the French style.

Bellarmino, for instance, in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, says:

"Yes, madame, this coat I assure you was made at Paris and I defy the best English tailor even to imitate it. There is not one of them can cut, madame. They can't cut. If you observe how this skirt is turned and this sleeve . . . a clumsy English rascal can do nothing like it. All French I assure you except the greatcoats. I never trust anything more than a greatcoat to an Englishman. You know one must encourage one's own people what one can."

Revenge, however, came quickly, and the careful cut of English Regency tailors, carried to perfection in the attire of Beau Brummell, sent all the masculine world hurrying to Savile Row. And Bellarmino's "cinnamon cut velvet, embroidered all over with gold, his cloth of silver waistcoat likewise embroidered with gold," gave place to the "exquisite propriety" (Byron's words) of sober drab and discreet blue.

As we have seen, when the hose of the Middle Ages had become too fashionably tight to permit movement, a gusset was introduced to ease the strain. This gusset, being displayed in its entirety by the shortness of the tunic, the Church demanded the wearing of a pouch in the interests of decency. Here we have the beginning of the 'cod-piece' proper, a masculine mode which lasted from 1461 for over a century and was still worn by old-fashioned gentlemen late into Queen Elizabeth's reign. Each country in Europe developed its own fancy variation of the mode. Indeed, it is possible to date and place with considerable accuracy unnamed and undated portraits of the period by studying the details of this one article of dress.

The Italians preferred a large braguette worn with a minimum of trunks. The French, to quote Rabelais, "bien joyusement attachée avec deux belles boucles d'or." The Germans favoured an ostentatious, heavily-bombasted cod-piece. Flemish taste ran to extravagant side puffings, and the more bashful English went

in for a more modest version of cod-piece, embroidered to match the slashed breeches from a slit in which it emerged, half hidden.

There are, of course, other ways for a man to parade his virility in his dress besides flaunting his legs in tights or displaying a manly cod-piece. Henry VIII was so proud of his broad shoulders that he had his doublets built out almost square, a style faithfully copied by his courtiers. Flat cap and jowl-beard squaring off the face further emphasized this bulky look. The shoes too were widened to twelve inches across the toes, in the Flemish fashion.

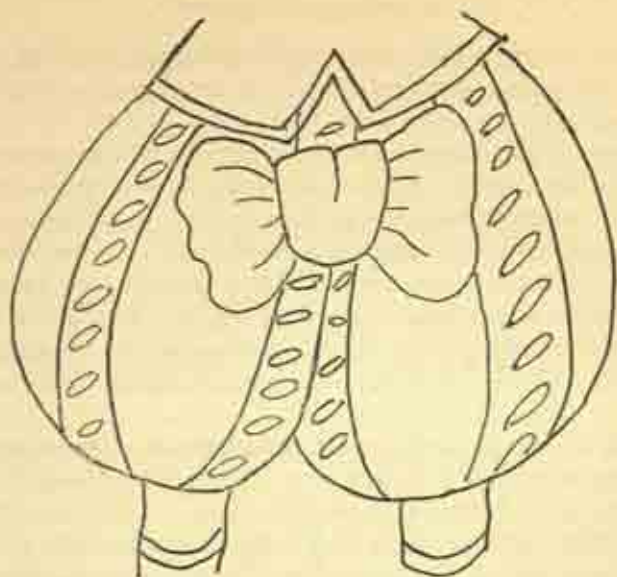
Henry VIII was, in fact, trying to imitate the Roman classic tunic in his square dress, for this is the period of the beginning of the Renaissance in England. But if there is anything at all that history teaches us it is that nothing in dress ever repeats itself, a new style invariably taking more from its own period than from its model.

Slashing, or 'blistering,' the clothes in fanciful patterns began in 1477, when Swiss troops triumphed over Burgundian invaders and dressed themselves in the tattered banners of their defeated enemies. It was a soldiers' fashion which spread rapidly all over Europe, and in the course of time reached America with the gentleman adventurers. At its extreme, no inch of dress, shoes, hat, or gloves escaped the stylish shredding. This fashion, as was the case with the cod-piece and piked shoes, was faithfully copied into the armour of the period. Shakespeare, who was dandy enough to wear the fashion himself, pokes fun at it in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Petruchio cries:

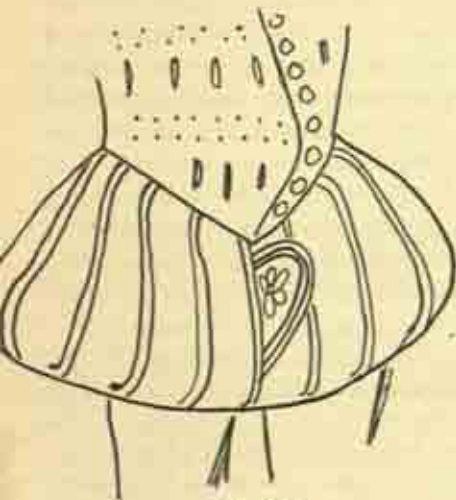
What's this? a sleeve? 'tis like a demi-cannon:  
What, up and down, carved like an apple-tart?  
Here's nip and nip and cut and slish and slash,  
Like to a censer in a barber's shop:  
Why, what' i' devil's name, tailor, call'st thou this?

With Charles I, Tudor bombast gave way to Stuart limpness. Soft satins, drooping plumes, dangling ribbons, flaccid lace flounces. Cavalier wide-topped boots fell in lazy folds, revealing layers of delicate lace flounces inside. A gentleman's stockings in 1658 measured two yards round the tops and were fastened to the

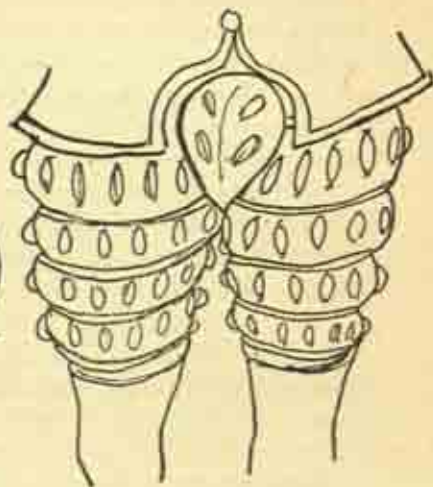




*End of sixteenth century (German)*



*1577 (English)*



*First half of sixteenth century  
(Spanish)*

#### THE COD-PIECE IN EUROPE

The English is from Sir Philip Sidney's portrait (National Portrait Gallery).

petticoat breeches with a row of points. Exquisites wore a love-lock, tied at the end with a ribbon, dangling over their left shoulder to be nearer the heart.

George Villiers, beloved friend of the King, wore jewels sewn all over his clothes. Buttons, feathers, sword, even his spurs glittered with diamonds and rubies, so that a contemporary describes him as "fettered and imprisoned in jewels." When Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, visited Paris in 1625 he ordered no less than twenty-seven complete outfits, one alone of which, fashioned in white cut velvet and covered with gems, cost £14,000—twenty or thirty times as much in our present reckoning.

To the Puritans such luxury and effeminacy were anathema, and they registered their disapproval by dressing themselves with the utmost sobriety and—a new idea—cleanliness. Devout Puritans wore coarse underwear embroidered lavishly with texts from the Bible. But the important thing about such underwear was that it was clean, a condition that would certainly have been distasteful to St Jerome, who insisted "the purity of the body and its garments means the impurity of the soul." Cleanliness, a middle-class virtue, made but little headway in the seventeenth century, being confined to the Puritans, until Beau Brummell put it on the map nearly two hundred years later by making gentlemen in Society bathe daily like himself.

Until then elegance continued to go, as it had always gone, hand in hand with dirt. The German Ambassador at the Court of Versailles at the height of the glory of the Sun King reported home that the Salle des Glaces was filthy and that the famous salons and corridors were littered with ordure so that the whole palace stank. Louis XIV, who set the pattern of elegant nobility for all Europe, washed himself once a year, and that was once a year more than many fine gentlemen thought necessary.

For centuries the method of holding up breeches remained unchanged; 'points,' or tagged laces, were slotted through eyelet holes uniting the breeches to the upper garment, called therefore for a long time the *pourpoint*. Sleeves were regarded as a separate garment and similarly attached by points to the tunic. Even shirt sleeves were put on separately and then laced on. Twenty-four

pairs of points were commonly needed to fasten a man into all his clothes, and dandies needed far more. Charles I was painted in a dress which displayed his points hanging down in clusters as a decoration, hose carelessly loose and wrinkled in the fashionably negligent style. Everything else in the ensemble was dependent upon the number and strength of the tags, and there was so lively a demand for them that John Bunyan was able to keep his wife and four children by making "long-tagged thread laces" to supply hawkers during the time that he was in prison.

When the first braces were invented in 1792, Mme de Genlis, governess to the Duc d'Orléans' children, thought them terribly dangerous and warned every one that they would inevitably enfeeble men's shoulders, exaggerate the belly, and weaken the human race.

The luxury and debauchery against which the Puritans had revolted were to be surpassed during the Restoration, for Charles II brought back with him the pleasures and vices of the French Court, where he had idled away several years of his exile.

Flounced petticoat breeches over which was pouched a loose rich shirt, enormous periwigs (Charles II borrowed this fashion from the Court of Louis XIV and introduced it into the English Court), hair-powder, face-painting, fans (for men), muffs (for men), stirop-hose two yards wide at the top. It was possibly the



#### CULT OF THE EFFEMINATE

Gentleman in petticoat breeches carrying muff. English, 1660.



most effeminate dress ever worn by men in this country. A poet of the time describes men as wearing

... a farm in shoe-strings edged with gold,  
And spangled garters worth a copyhold,  
A hose and doublet which a Lordship cost,  
A gaudy cloak three mansions price almost ...  
A costly plume, a feather on the head  
Prized at the church's tythe, the poor man's bread.

But the King, who preferred women rather than dress, decided in October 1666 to change to a new style "and never again alter." This new style was the "Persian vest" described by Samuel Pepys as "a long cassocke close to the body of black clothe pinked with white silke under it and a coat over it and the legs ruffled with black ribands like a pigeon's legs and a very fine and handsome garment." Evelyn remarked of the new mode that it was "a comely and manly habit. Too good to hold."

Yet hold it did, and although the French King showed his spite by dressing his lacqueys in the English style, the new mode triumphed. And, indeed, never again did alter, because this was the beginning of the present morning-coat.

The waist, up under the armpits at the beginning of the Restoration, sank to the knees within a few years, giving a peculiarly long-bodied, short-legged effect which was still further developed before the end of the seventeenth century, and is displayed to perfection in the chairs of the Restoration period with their overlong backs and diminutive little legs, like dachshunds.

Lord Foppington, reprimanding his tailor in Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, complains that he has set the pockets too high in his new suit. The tailor replies that were they one inch lower they would not hold his Lordship's handkerchief, to which Foppington makes reply: "Rat my packet handkerchief! Have I nat a page to carry it? You may make him a packet up to his chin apurpose for it. But I will nat have mine so near my face. . . . The packet becomes no part of the bady but the knee."

Because the great periwig hid the shoulders, interest began to centre on the neck. This is the point in history when the cravat begins its long reign. The neckcloth first came to England with the Roman soldiers, who were prudently allotted a *focale* with their



kit to protect their throats against the rheumatic English climate. Charles II liked French lace cravats so much that he introduced them into England and wore them on all occasions himself, even with armour.

There were dozens of ways of tying the cravat. The King preferred to wind it loosely twice round the neck and then knot it casually. Made of lace and muslin, unstarched, worn dirty and bedraggled more often than not by fine gentlemen who contemptuously rejected laundering as a Puritan fetish—such was the beginning of the cravat.

Presently a narrow black ribbon was tied over the cravat, and this ribbon soon grew wider and wider until it became a substitute cravat and was often worn on the bare neck by itself.

Lord Byron and the French Revolution both profoundly affected the history of neckwear. *Sans cravates* as well as *sans culottes*, the French Revolutionaries stormed the Bastille bare-necked. Later they adopted a coarse scarf, and though Robespierre and the Revolutionary generals meticulously retained their high-necked shirts and broad black stocks, anything flung round the neck passed without criticism.

The Incroyables of 1793 were in nothing more exaggerated than their pouter-pigeon bosoms, artfully contrived by means of a small pillow worn beneath the cravats. Mercier, that invaluable witness, described their heads resting on their cravats as on a cushion and their chins buried so deep in masses of material that it was impossible for them to move their heads at all.

Returning *émigrés* and *nouveau riche* young thugs (the black-shirts of their day, they were called Muscadins) prowled the streets of Paris at night armed with stout cudgels to beat up Jacobins. They wore a black velvet collar on their coats in mourning for Louis XVI. This black velvet collar has never gone out of fashion since, though few men to-day could tell why they wear it.

The Incroyables, however, were not original in their curious attire. They had merely borrowed, in the general French enthusiasm for all things English (an enthusiasm started perhaps by Voltaire, who liked everything English except our climate and our sauces), their sartorial ideas from the English 'Macaronis.'

The London Macaroni Club was at its height in 1772, a playboy club for young gentlemen who had made the Grand Tour and returned to England with a passion for Italy and everything Italian. They favoured a style of dress with pouter-pigeon bosom, cravat swathed over the chin, skimpy white silk breeches worn extremely tight and giving the effect of bow legs. Besides these unmistakable signs, a Macaroni distinguished himself from others by his very high wig, on the top of which was perched a tiny hat, which he raised in salute by means of a tall cane. He wore high-heeled shoes with striped Italian stockings, and it was these striped Italian stockings which the French Incroyables adopted in the erroneous belief that they were typically English. In such devious ways does fashion travel.

The Macaroni collar was so high as to force the head backward. A wag wrote:

Six yards of cravat with of starch half a pound  
To keep head erect whilst my neck it went round;  
Shirt collars like whiskers of eminent size,  
Just so high as to give a slight glimpse of my eyes.

Byron's friend and admirer, Tom Moore, declared that fashionable young men tied their cravats as tightly as those used by people to sneak out of this world.

Once a fashion starts it gallops to extremes, each devotee taking the cult farther and farther. So with the cravat. Swaddled round the throat like a bandage (as the original *focale* must have been worn) and tied *de rigueur* so tightly as to render it impossible for a gentleman to take his afternoon nap in one without fear of suffocating, the cravat grew ever tighter and higher. For forty years, as collars heightened continually and cravats were tied ever more tightly, it was the highest fashion for a gentleman to display every symptom of strangulation—a hectic colour, popping eyes, head jerked backward. The Prince Regent is a perfect example.

From this extreme Lord Byron, who could never tolerate anything irksome, and whose valet Fletcher was even more careless than his master, rescued the young men of Europe by irritably wrenching off his uncomfortable stock one day, thus causing his high shirt collar to collapse about his exposed throat. Unwittingly he had launched a new fashion.

The Romantics, none of whom had so beautiful a neck as his lordship, copied him slavishly. Frenchmen abandoned starch and tore open their shirt-collars, and all the young poets of Europe threw away their stocks and let their hair grow romantically long and dishevelled, to the disgust of their idol, who at heart had a profound respect for the conventions.

But the genius of his age had the unfortunate gift of creating Frankenstein monsters. Byron was dismayed when he met Trelawny for the first time to find his "Corsair" in the flesh as though he had conjured him up. Byron had known and liked George Brummell, and, had it not been for his crippled leg and the handicap of his ploughboy valet Fletcher, might well have succeeded in becoming a dandy himself. Leigh Hunt—it was before they quarrelled—described Byron's dress thus: "His dress which was black with white trousers and which he wore buttoned close over his body completed the succinctness and gentlemanliness of his appearance."

But this was in London, where Byron was careful to dress exactly like other young men about town. In his portraits, however, he chose to be painted in loose clothes with the open throat which acted as a beacon for the liberals of Europe, and as often as not with rolling clouds, thunder, and lightning in



"INCROYABLE"

After the caricature by Carle  
Vernet. French, 1795.



the background. Byron had become the victim of his own legend.

Liberalism in his day was considered so terrible a danger (just as Socialism is so considered in America to-day) that the least manifestation of it was remorselessly stamped out by the remaining and badly frightened monarchs of Europe. In the year 1814 an earnest German dress-reform movement was started with the innocent objective of freeing the neck from the oppression of the high collar. But anything to do with any kind of reform roused the fury of Frederick William III of Prussia, who in 1820 prohibited open necks by law as rebellious.

The Tsar went even further than the Prussian King. In 1807 he commanded his troops to be posted on the roads in Russia with orders to examine the travellers in every carriage and seize those males who had the temerity to wear new-fangled long pantaloons (revolutionary) instead of old-fashioned knee-breeches (conservative). The revolutionary lower halves of the offending pantaloons were to be summarily cut off.

Throughout the first fifty years of the nineteenth century the shifting social stresses in France were exactly mirrored in the different ways in which Frenchmen tied their cravats. It was no less an observer of the social scene than Balzac who declared, "La cravate, c'est l'homme." A steady stream of manuals emerged from the presses of France wherein, with the aid of careful diagrams, the whole art of tying the cravat was lucidly explained. Balzac was himself suspected of being the anonymous author of the most popular of these handbooks, *L'Art de mettre sa cravate*, which covered the entire subject so satisfactorily in eighteen lessons, besides listing the names and addresses of the smartest Paris cravat-shops, that it sold out more than a dozen editions within a few years and was translated into every European language.

Gentlemen's valets in the fashionable quarters of London made a tidy fortune in their spare time by instructing middle-class aspirants to smartness how to tie a cravat—at a guinea a lesson.

A cravat could be tied *en cascade*, *à la gastronome*, *à la Byron*, *à la paresseuse*, and so on. Each profession adopted its own distinctive style. The *cravate de bureaucrate*, for instance, which



Daumier satirized in 1850, was high, tight, and black, stiffened with whalebone and well stuffed with horse-hair and pig's bristles.

The stock fitted smoothly round the throat and fastened tightly at the back of the neck. Usually too tightly. Charles Dickens, in a letter to a friend from Cornwall in 1843 describing his trip, writes:

I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey. It would have done you good to hear me. I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckles off the back of my stock all the way.

Books on etiquette, for which there was a brisk demand from the *nouveau riche* and lesser *petits commerçants*, advised a minimum of two hours' attention to be spent on the cravat when dressing. Brummell required three. Any mistake in tying, it was stressed, was necessarily fatal. The faulty cravat must be discarded and a fresh one attempted. The final touches were to be applied with a hot iron after the arrangement of the cravat had been completed.

"The greatest insult that can be offered to a man *comme il faut* is to seize him by the cravat," insists a manual published in 1828, "... in this case blood only can wash out the stain upon the honour of either party."

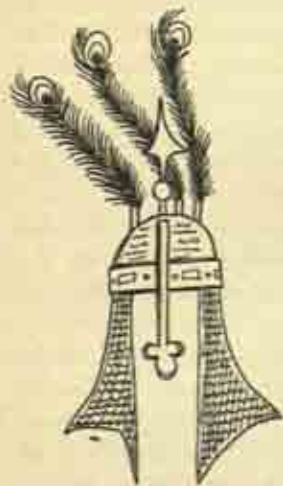
For 150 years the neckwear of the well-dressed Englishman has been regarded as the supreme expression of quiet good taste. To-day, however, along with Marshall Aid and the presence of American troops in many European countries, the American tie is also making its appearance. This phenomenon, usually violent in colour and extravagant in design, often painted with hearty slogans or naked women (symbolizing American virility?) must not be overlooked in the sartorial history of our time. So far the American tie has not made a vast impression in England, being sold for the most part in the Charing Cross Road and East End outfitters' shops in London which cater chiefly for sailors. Will its influence increase?

Besides cravats, waistcoats were a favoured object for the exercise of male coquetry in the nineteenth century. An American manual of etiquette, published in 1851, says, "The waistcoat

is capable of a great variety of effects and expressions. It may be quiet or garish, meek or haughty, modest or presuming, elegant or slovenly."

And our *English Tailor and Cutter* found it necessary in 1870 to offer practical advice on this delicate subject to "young gentlemen who like to be conspicuous in their dress."

In addition to the dash which could be introduced into the waistcoat, the line of the trousers was of the utmost importance—"tight at knee, full of foot, and made up spicy, hanging well over the heel," thus imparting a saucy nautical look. The *Tailor and Cutter* kept its own correspondent in Paris—not, indeed, to report what Frenchmen were wearing, for that was a matter of total indifference to its readers, but to describe precisely what English gentlemen in Paris were wearing. During the Franco-Prussian War this correspondent enterprisingly sent his sartorial reports to London by balloon.



WAR HELMET ORNAMENTED  
WITH PEACOCKS' FEATHERS

Kurdish, nineteenth century.

Ingenuity sometimes crept into formal dress. In 1902 a "new coronation vest" was patented. This fancy waistcoat was made to button high across the chest with the object of preventing the wearer from catching a chill. Another helpful invention was the "revolving button," described as a "useful novelty making fastening easier and preventing fraying." Buttons were then invariably covered with material, bone buttons being considered shamefully plebeian.

It would be ungrateful to end this chapter without a glance at the two most important English men of fashion, Beau Nash and Beau Brummell. Other dandies there were, indeed, but they did other things as well—whereas the true dandy regards his dandyism as a whole-time occupation. D'Orsay, for instance, was also

a gifted sculptor, Disraeli renounced his sartorial experiments for politics, and Charles Dickens for literature, while Samuel Pepys, despite his passionate interest in dress, was content to follow fashion and dared not aspire to lead it.

The true dandy is the complete Narcissus, and it is typical of both Nash and Brummell that neither was known to cherish any real love for anyone beside themselves, and both died bachelors.

Beau Nash was responsible for the introduction of better manners into English high life, Beau Brummell for the introduction of personal cleanliness. Both were gamblers.

Beau Nash was born in 1674, of a good but impoverished family. A wit and unsuccessful lawyer besides being a man of fashion, he went to Bath, like so many other adventurers of his time, to seek his fortune at the gaming tables. There he had the good luck to be elected Master of Ceremonies of Bath.

He took his new office seriously, and drove about Bath in a magnificent coach drawn by six greys and attended by laced lacqueys, deferred to by the highest in the land. Nash wore a gorgeous uniform of his own design, with a great white hat and white staff, and his commands were implicitly obeyed both in dress and in behaviour. His edicts helped to reform the gross manners of Society, for he forbade the wearing of top-boots and of swords at Assemblies. He frowned on duelling and swearing. And he once tore a morning apron off the Duchess of Queensberry, who had imprudently appeared at an evening ball in it, throwing the offensive garment into a corner of the Assembly Room like an outraged schoolmaster.

The Bath Corporation had reason to be thankful to Nash, for under his guidance the town prospered and became the leading centre of fashion in all England. Assembly Rooms were added, the Pump Room was rebuilt, and a new playhouse designed.

Bathing began early in the morning. Bathers entered the healing waters dressed in stiff canvas gowns, to which ladies fastened a floating tray to hold bouquet and handkerchief (the tray being attached to their waists by ribbons).



When in 1745 the abolition of licensed gambling by Act of Parliament took Beau Nash's livelihood away, the Corporation of Bath voted him an annual allowance of 120 guineas, which together with the sale of his trinkets enabled the "Monarch of Bath" to live out the rest of his life in dignified, if faded, splendour. And when he died the city gave him a sumptuous public funeral.

Beau Brummell, born in 1778, flew higher and sank lower. He was somewhat less of a personality, less intelligent, more neurotic, than Nash. George Brummell's grandfather had been a valet, and the money which enabled George to be sent to Eton had been made by shopkeeping. It is extraordinary that a man with the double handicap of service and trade in his family should have been able to climb the social ladder as he did. It must be remembered that even so dazzling a social figure as Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose family tree was infinitely better than Brummell's, had a painful struggle before Society would condescend to receive him. Pitt, during a debate in the House of Commons, sneered at his stage association, and the Duchess of Devonshire herself, liberal-minded as she was for those days, hesitated before allowing him to be presented to her, because his father had been connected with the stage.

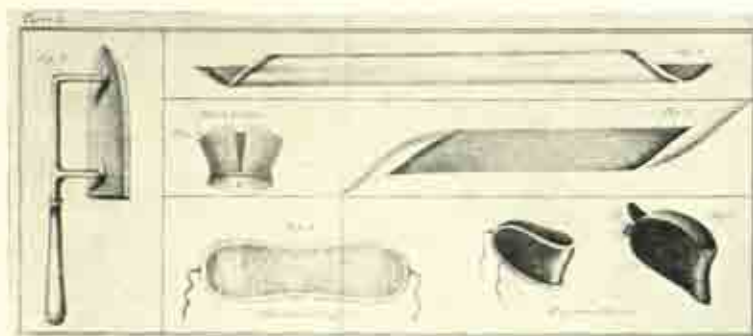
At Eton Brummell was known as "Buck Brummell," and had already begun to display the pathological horror of dirt which was to dominate his life. He had a certain insolent wit, and at sixteen schoolboy charm enough to attract the Prince of Wales, who gave him a commission in his own Hussars. Brummell paid so little attention to his military duties, however, that he was only able to identify his own troops on parade because they included one tall soldier who had a blue nose. Not that the officers led an altogether exacting military life. They paraded daily at one, drank till five, and spent every evening at the theatre.

At the age of twenty-five Brummell came into a fortune of thirty thousand pounds, gave up the Service, and settled in Mayfair. He was an instant social success.

Not only great lords but also great ladies fawned on him, begging his advice about their clothes, and weeping in despair if



## MALE GLAMOUR



## THE TIMES

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*Top and foot: PLATES FROM  
"THE ART OF TYING THE  
CRAVAT," 1828*

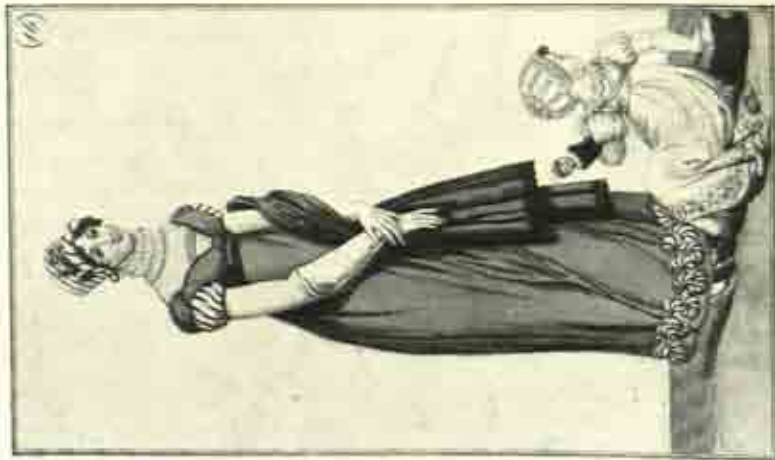
*Left: GENTLEMAN'S CORSET, 1895*

*Right: ADVERTISEMENT IN  
"THE TIMES," 1913*

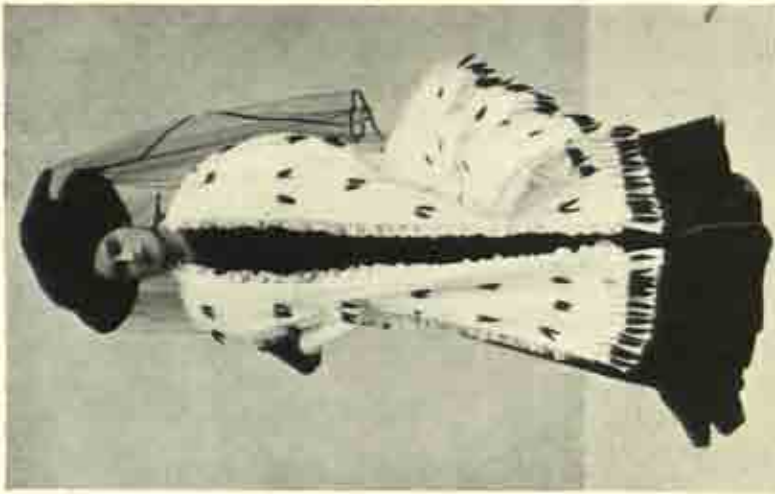
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FASHIONS IN MOURNING WEAR



HALF-MOURNING, 1812



HALF-MOURNING, 1912

his verdict were unfavourable. The Prince of Wales treated Brummell with the tenderest devotion and consulted him assiduously about every detail of each new royal outfit. "I made him," Brummell boasted after their famous quarrel, "and I can very well unmake him."

Brummell dressed with sobriety, making a fetish of fit and cleanliness. His morning dress consisted of a blue coat, buff waistcoat, buckskins, and top-boots. In the evening he wore a blue coat, white waistcoat, black tights, and, "relic of the Macaroni Club," striped silk stockings. Brummell's gloves were made for him by four different glovers, of whom one glover specialized in the thumbs only. They fitted his hand so perfectly that his finger-nails showed in outline. Three barbers were required to attend to his hair, one for the back, one for the sides, and one for the front.

Such was Brummell's preoccupation with cleanliness that he always changed his linen thrice every day and insisted on having the soles of his boots polished as brightly as the uppers. When he was going to a party he ordered his sedan (characteristically lined with quilted white satin like a baby's cradle and with a snow-white sheepskin on the floor) to fetch him from inside his own dressing-room and to deliver him right inside the drawing-room of his hostess, lest a speck of dust spoil his perfection.

It may be noted that our present-day Guardsmen are not infrequently carried on to the parade ground by their colleagues for the same reason.

When Brummell visited noble country houses he always took with him his own *pot-de-chambre* in its special travelling case of mahogany bound with brass. He was, however, reluctant to leave London, which he loved, for the country, which he loathed. Fox-hunting, the delight of English country gentlemen, filled him with horror, not because of the cruelty but because of the dirt. He was a poor horseman, as the broken nose which marred his good looks testified. He kept two hacks but only for the sake of appearances.

Brummell's cravats were twelve inches high and meticulously starched. At his three daily toilets he discarded them by

the dozen until he had achieved the perfection of folds he required.

His recipe for good dressing was "Clean linen, plenty of it, and country washing," and his renown brought the English laundress into such repute that for many years after his death French dandies still continued to send their linen from the Jockey Club across the Channel to Dover to be 'got up.'

Brummell it was who made black shoes gentlemanly, a point of view still firmly held by English public schools, brown being only tolerated to-day in the country.

Brummell liked fine porcelain, collected snuff-boxes, and also walking-sticks, and even began to write a book on the History of Dress, but his major passion was dressing. He rose very late and spent practically all day bathing in perfumed baths, being shaved, and slowly dressing himself before an admiring audience of hangers-on. Every evening he had a shoal of invitations to choose from. He kept his box at Covent Garden and spent much time with royalty. He entertained beyond his means. Such was his fame during the height of his power (1799 to 1814) that newspapers in reporting social events printed his name before that of the most illustrious guests present, and when he finally quarrelled with the Prince of Wales, the Committee of Watier's Club debated at length whether to leave out the Prince of Wales rather than Brummell from the invitations to an important festivity.

The quarrel with the Prince of Wales is well known. Brummell, whose wit consisted largely in impertinence, disliked Mrs Fitzherbert. He referred to her, for instance, as Benina, with reference to a Carlton House porter nicknamed because of his enormous girth "Big Ben." In sending for her carriage on one occasion after a dinner-party, he called out in a loud voice in the Prince's presence for "*Mistress Fitzherbert's carriage.*" Brummell may have been too sure of his power, for he had been allowed many impertinences, and the Prince was not the type of man to inspire respect in his friends.

True or not, it was related of Brummell that he accepted a wager that he would give an order to the Prince and that the Prince would carry it out without protest. At supper that



evening when both men were in their cups Brummell shouted out, "George, ring the bell!" The Prince did so, and when the man-servant came in answer to the bell nodded in Brummell's direction and said briefly, "Take this drunkard to bed."

Such a story does not ring quite true of the Prince, who was hardly likely to retain his sobriety longer than his guests. More typical of him is the true story of how he was too drunk on his bridal night with Queen Caroline to rise from the bedroom carpet, where he lay all night in a drunken stupor while his unfortunate bride awaited him in vain under the ostrich-plumed canopy of the nuptial couch. But then he disliked Caroline heartily from the start.

It was not the quarrel with the Prince of Wales which ruined Brummell, though the Prince never forgave him, but gambling. At the period when England was struggling for her life against Napoleon, English Society continued its favourite diversion of gambling. Famous fortunes melted away in nightly sessions of loo and faro, and Charles James Fox, his coat turned inside out and his face blackened to propitiate the Goddess of Chance, sat at the gaming tables with his friends from early evening till sunrise, night after night. Lord Stavordale won £11,000 at a single throw, and the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire ran up nearly a million pounds' worth of card debts. "Duns in. Furniture out." Bailiffs invested the noblest salons. And Brummell, who was no fool despite his affectations, hoped to win enough at the gaming tables to put his finances in order, no doubt, and then quit.

With the defeat of Napoleon, London filled with Blücher's Prussian officers and the Emperor Alexander's Russian commanders, all of whom were heavy gamblers. Brummell began to lose after first winning. Then he went to moneylenders to recoup. Bankrupt and heavily in debt, he made one last appearance in his box at Covent Garden, whence he fled by carriage to the coast and Calais. He was thirty-eight.

He could never learn to retrench, however, and in France, on borrowed money, continued to lead the same life of elegance and luxury, until at last he was seized by French bailiffs and gaoled for

debt. He languished in gaol for three months. Characteristically the first thing he did in prison was to appoint one of his fellow-prisoners to be his valet, whose duty it was to provide each morning fifteen quarts of warm water and two quarts of milk for Brummell's bath. Inside prison he held his daily levees as usual, and visitors flocked into the prison to pay him court.

Faithful friends still raised contributions for him from England (William IV once gave £100), but he could not resist luxury and gradually became so poor that he lacked money even to pay postage on his begging letters. A poor French tailor out of charity offered at last to patch Brummell's one pair of trousers for nothing, and the great man was obliged to retire to bed while he did so.

Brummell grew bald and spent every penny left to him on perfumed oil for his wig. He lived in squalor, his wits wandering, and he gave imaginary receptions to his former noble friends in his dirty room, announcing at the door the proudest names in English Society, shaking hands with air, conversing brightly with an imaginary Prince of Wales (now George IV and determined to have nothing more to do with him), and finally coming to himself at last, to tumble weeping into his tattered chair.

He went mad, grew filthy and gluttonous, devoured fifteen dishes at a meal, and finally was taken struggling to the lunatic asylum at Caen, where he died in 1840.

No one attended his funeral, and his grave was soon a mass of weeds.

But he had not lived in vain. Fifteen years later a manual of etiquette recommended that a gentleman should always wash his hands after handling money, whether in the form of bank-notes or coins, remarking "a polite shop-keeper never gives copper change unless wrapped in paper."

At the same time the following essentials are laid down for a gentleman's toilet:

- (1) A good sharp knife to cut the nails.
- (2) Tweezers to remove superfluous hair from face, neck, ears, and nose.

- (3) Hair oils (castor-oil stiffened with bees-wax and meal is best).
- (4) Hair dye for hair and beard.
- (5) Perfumed chalk if the complexion is inclined to be sallow.
- (6) A little rouge to be used carefully so as to avoid detection.
- (7) A minimum of six dozen cravats when travelling, even for a week-end.



#### JAPANESE FACE ARMOUR

Lower part of a bronze war-mask  
with attached moustache of human hair.

Nineteenth century.

*British Museum.*



### CHAPTER THREE

## THE DRESS AND THE JOB

Nature did not build that lovely edifice, woman, with legs of sufficient length to throw over a horse. Consequently she must either cling to the present graceful fashion of riding side-saddle or resort to the ignominy of a chair.

*Editorial in the "Tailor and Cutter" (1875)*

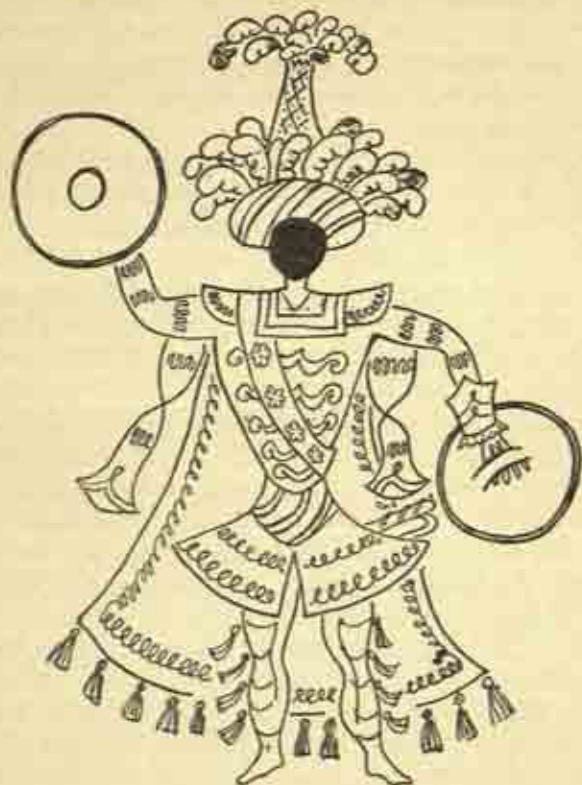
RARELY in history has fashionable dress been designed for comfort. Glorification has been the objective in mind in designing garments for both sexes, and therefore personal convenience in wear has been readily ignored.

This has been particularly the case with military uniforms, which, until the First World War, were designed to make the soldier stand out as much as possible by the use of bright colours and tall headdresses, so that he might awe his enemies and in leisure moments (of which there were considerable) fascinate the opposite sex.

The Boer War brought home the lesson that a scarlet jacket makes an easy target against a dun landscape. The overwhelming destructiveness, however, of modern weapons of war is rapidly rendering protective uniform useless. For what good is khaki drill against the atomic bomb? This impasse will probably stimulate the designing of new decorative non-functional uniforms. For since no uniform to-day can afford either concealment or protection, we may profitably revert to a uniform which by its splendour at least encourages recruits into the Army, and which women, who have much to do with what men wear, find seductive.

Since mankind has been so consistently occupied by wars it is curious to find how few attempts have ever been made to make military uniform either protective or at least practical. The Spartans, it is true, introduced crimson battle-dress with red boots, in order to hide the blood-stains. Napoleon, too, at one

stage in his career, changed the colour of the trousers of one of his Guards regiments from too-revealing white to blue. In general, however, alteration in military uniform has been for the purpose



#### MILITARY GLAMOUR

Uniform of Negro boy cymbalist attached to the Gardes Françaises.  
French, 1786.

of rendering it more glamorous, therefore an easier target for the enemy.

In the Middle Ages knightly armour was often more of a hindrance than a protection, a fallen warrior being unable to rise without assistance, but obliged to lie flat on his back, helpless as a

beetle. Some armour had three layers or more of mail and metal. A French knight at Agincourt reported that their armour was so heavy that they could only advance very slowly, with frequent pauses to take breath. A blow received on a barrel helmet often enough wrung its wearer's neck. Metal armour was terribly hot and heavy to wear—especially during the Crusades, when the sun of the Holy Land beat down so fiercely that the metal became as hot as a cooking-pan.

Locked in metal plates from head to foot, a knight in the fourteenth century rode to battle half stifled and half blinded. There was also the point to consider that armour rusted in the rain. Chaucer's knight is described as wearing a fustian tunic stained with dark smudges from the rust off his armour. The surcoat, which was introduced to stop the armour from rusting by preventing it from getting wet, also added to the weight the knight had to carry into battle.

The possibilities of luxurious display in armour were exploited by the richest nobles, who lavished fortunes in this manner, and whose horses were equally caparisoned in costly armour. The rich trappings proved an irresistible provocation to pursuit and capture by the enemy, the value of the trappings often being worth more than the possible ransom, and the heavy weight of the armour rendering capture an easy matter.

It was recorded in 1409 that the six pages of Sir John de Cornwall rode horses covered with ermine and cloth of gold. At the entry into Bayonne of the Comte de Foix his horse's steel *testière* (head-covering) was enriched with gold and jewels costing 15,000 crowns. And so on.

Only the wealthiest knights, of course, wore full armour. Common soldiers wore none at all, and sometimes fought even without shoes.

All the eccentricities of the current mode were faithfully copied in the armour of the day—pointed shoes, broad shoes, the cod-piece, shoulder-wings, blistering, the peascod-belly, even the Stuart ruffled petticoat-breeches. Knightly helmets lent themselves to such grotesque shapes as pig-faces, steeples, and long beaks, according to the mode in civilian dress, and the most fantastic were reserved for tournaments. The raising of the



hand in military salute is said to derive from the knight's gesture of raising the visor of his helmet to show his face.

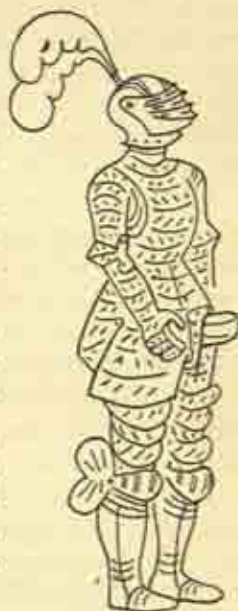
Before the increasing power of cannon brought all armour into disuse it had grown so excessively heavy and cumbersome that James I declared armour to be an excellent invention, for "it not only saves the life of the wearer but hinders him from doing hurt to anyone else."

Fashion dies harder in the Army than outside it, and metal breastplates continued to be worn by the military long after changed methods of warfare had rendered them quite obsolete. The Household Cavalry still wear metal breastplates on ceremonial occasions.

The Duke of Marlborough fought in the heat and dirt of Oudenarde in a magnificent laced coat with his ducal star glittering among the orders on his breast, long periwig, and fine plumed cocked-hat. He must have presented a wonderful target for the enemy. Nelson, who also preferred to fight in his medals, was less lucky on the *Victory*.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when personal cleanliness was almost unknown (except by a small band of Puritans and Quakers who were generally held in contempt), the British Army was dressed in white breeches and powdered wigs. Many of Wellington's officers dared not sit down in their uniform lest the over-tight seams of the pantaloons should give way—which they sometimes did, for really smart subalterns were sewn into their trousers.

In Kipling's time British soldiers in India wore dark, tight trousers and a scarlet monkey-jacket, the finest target imaginable. In our own time, when khaki has been adopted for military wear



THE MODE COPIED IN  
ARMOUR

Note codpiece, and  
slashing. European,  
early sixteenth century.

in nearly every country in the world, the dress uniforms of many of our famous old regiments revert to former splendours, with sword, epaulettes, flashes, etc. And what better target could be devised than the contemporary kilts and sporrans of the Highland regiments? It is true they terrified the German soldiers of the 1914 War. But this dress, evolved for comfort on wet Northern moors, is surely the least practical for the extremes of tropic and Arctic climates where the wars of to-day are fought. And what soldier likes dull 'battle-dress'? The answer to these inconsistencies is that morale (which depends to a remarkable extent upon what clothes are worn) is more important to a soldier than safety precautions, or so the authorities think.

The dress of the clergy has been more distinguished in history for its pomp than its piety. Supposed to lead their flock away from the sin of vanity, only too frequently Christian priests have led them into it by direct example.

The Ancients dressed both their gods and their priests in robes of great splendour which required an army of dressmakers, jewellers, launderers, and valets to keep in repair, and the upkeep of which increased the burden of taxes to crippling proportions. The early Christian clergy dressed so luxuriously that in A.D. 785 the Pope was obliged to pass a special sumptuary law to stop them. They had even let their hair grow to cover their tonsures.

The missionary Boniface wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to warn him that the frivolous garments of his clerics announced the coming of Antichrist. Thomas à Becket infuriated his sovereign and scandalized Paris by the splendour of his scarlet robes and costly furs, while the bejewelled robes flaunted by the English clergy in the thirteenth century provoked Pope Innocent IV to exclaim, "Oh, England, thou garden of delights. Thou art truly an inexhaustible fountain of riches. From thy abundance much may be exacted," and promptly demand that a handsome percentage of these costly vestments should be sent to Rome for the benefit of the Roman clergy.

The poet Langland in the fourteenth century voiced the general bitterness felt by commoners against the worldly prelate, describing him as

A pricker on a palfrey from Manor to Manor,  
An heap of hounds at his arse as he a lord were;

and Chaucer too never let an opportunity slip to have a dig at the venal priest who

... set his benefice to hire  
And leaves his sheep encumbered in the mire  
To run to London to earn easy bread  
By singing masses for the wealthy dead,

or at the monk who flaunted his wealth, was a glutton, kept costly horses in his stables, and strutted in the latest fashions

His sleeves were garnished at the hand  
With fine grey furr, the finest in the land—

and who was not ashamed to wear a handsome gold brooch fashioned indecorously into a lover's knot.

As for the Prioress in the *Canterbury Tales*, she is little better, though Chaucer treats her more indulgently. First of all, she had no right to be on a pilgrimage at all—it was against the rules of her Order; secondly, she was breaking convent regulations in wearing her veil coquettishly raised to show her fashionably high forehead (plucked, too, no doubt):

It was almost a spanne brood.

Nor had she any right to harbour a pack of "smale houndes." That was forbidden too.

A century later the poet John Skelton (Poet Laureate to Henry VII and the first to be so created) wrote indignantly of priests who

ryde with golde all trapped  
In purpull pall belapped  
Some hatted and some cappyd  
Richly and warmley wrappyd  
God wott to theyre grate paynes  
In rochettes of fyne staynes  
Whyte as Mary's milke  
and Tabardes of fyne silke  
and Stryruppes with golde beglozed...

In his pride and pomp Cardinal Wolsey, the ambitious butcher's boy, kept a household of over a thousand servants, and all England knew that he had obtained for his natural son the benefices of four archdeaconries, a deanery, five prebends, and



two rectories. Wolsey in the days of his power compelled bishops to tie his shoe-latchets, treated Ambassadors like scullions, and moved on his stately way in gorgeous procession with greater pomp than the King himself. When he was finally disgraced and arrived to seek refuge at his Leicester Abbey benefice he set eyes on it for the first time. Such are the kind of abuses which led to the Reformation in England: some people think Henry VIII's matrimonial affairs merely precipitated what must inevitably have come to pass.

Few women of her time led a more active life than Queen Elizabeth I. Restless by nature and a pleasure-lover, she travelled continually all over England. She loved hunting and was fond of dancing. Her stately travelling coach was completely unsprung, for such a conception of comfort was then unknown, and must have jolted horribly over the deep-rutted roads on her travels.

She journeyed dressed in her customary magnificent version of the fashionable mode—more fashionable than most, for she enacted stringent laws to prevent any of her Court ladies from wearing as gorgeous and extreme styles as she wore herself—a huge yellow wig looped up with chains of pearls, an enormous starched ruff (sometimes two ruffs at the same time, one spreading behind her head like a great fan, the other extending round her neck like a large plate), a bejewelled stiff bodice whaleboned to a sharp point in front and tightly fastened over rigid triangular corsets made of wood and metal, cumbersome lozenged petticoat stretched over a gigantic farthingale and worn below a heavily bejewelled rich stuff overskirt, high-heeled shoes raised up still higher on tall cork soles.

No difference between the weight and style of her dress summer or winter. She wore the extreme décolletage cut down to the nipples in the severest winter weather and exactly the same tremendously weighty costume during the hottest days of summer. It was a dress in which personal comfort counted for nothing, and she wore it with pride, for it was from her regal glory that she obtained her satisfaction.

More practical for State travelling was the Pharaoh's State crown of gold ornamented with rosettes of gold and precious gems, emblematic gold feathers and gold streamers, which took

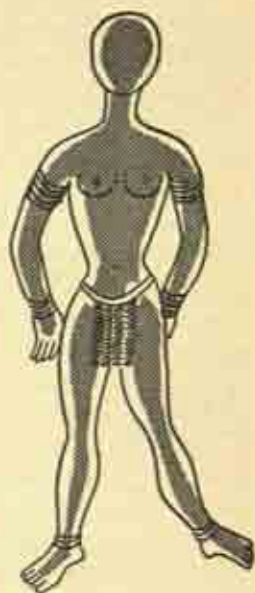
to pieces in order that it could be packed flat and stowed away in a small compass. This in the twelfth dynasty.

The conception of adapting dress to particular seasons and occasions is quite new. In France to-day evening dress is still worn by men for a morning marriage and other ceremonies, and it is only in the last twenty years or so that it has been possible for women to wear a comfortably short dress by day and a long dress for the evening. Lady Blessington, advising the Contessa Guiccioli what to wear for the daytime opening of Parliament in 1832, wrote to her:

Full dress means your hair dressed with feathers or else an evening hat or bonnet with feathers. The rose-coloured one you wore the last time I had the pleasure of seeing you would be just the thing to wear. Any gown you like that is low in the breast and short sleeves.

It took European Society a long time to break away from Louis XIV's ideas of formal propriety in dress which made high powdered wigs obligatory wear for Mass and forced withered old noble ladies to shiver through protracted morning ceremonies at his Court in the prescribed décolletage which left them naked almost to the waist. Long after France had taken to wearing long trousers, English Court functions continued with knee-breeches and silk stockings, and to some extent still do.

Revolutions and civil wars cause alterations in fashions, but they do not necessarily cause more practical fashions. The French Revolution caused its citizens to try to dress like ancient Greeks. The Russian Revolution of 1917 made leather jackets and berets



APRON OF CHIPPED  
OSTRICH-EGG DISKS  
STRUNG ON WILD  
FLAX

Worn by unmarried  
girls of the Lango tribe.  
Contemporary East  
African.



popular for both sexes, such dress being considered suitable wear for engineers, the most popular job in the new Soviet state. Thirty years later in Soviet Russia there is a marked return to picture-hats, flowery silks, and long hair for women, though just as many as before choose to become engineers.

It was Catherine de Médici who first introduced the ruff into France. A scheming and intriguing Queen, concerned above all else with her own aggrandisement, she wore ruffs of such giant dimensions that at table she was obliged to make use of a specially designed spoon with a very long handle in order to be able to convey her soup to her mouth at all.

Throughout history explorers by sea and land wore the fashionable dress of their day, however unsuited it might be to the conditions they had to face. Drake strutted the deck of the *Golden Hind* in peascod-bellied armour worn over heavily bombasted Elizabethan dress. Raleigh took no less trouble over his exquisitely impractical toilet in the fever-haunted tropical jungles of South America than at Court under the piercingly critical eye of the Queen.

Lady Hester Stanhope (she it was who considered Brummell the only civilized Englishman) went among the wild Druses of North Africa in flimsy Regency muslins with modishly exposed bosom, exactly as she had dressed at 10 Downing Street while her uncle, Prime Minister Pitt, was alive and she his hostess. In the course of time she adopted what romantic articles of Druse dress she fancied. They were usually parts of male dress.

David Livingstone's wife, Mary Moffat, herself the daughter of a missionary and brought up in tropical Africa, wore exactly the same clothes there as she would have worn in Victorian England. In 1840 this included a heavy stuff dress touching the ground, many petticoats, and suffocating corsets.

She was a woman of worth whose share in Livingstone's work has not yet received due recognition. Out of a missionary salary of £100 annually (of which they spent £30 on medicines for the natives), the Livingstones had to maintain themselves, bring up their family of five children, dress and feed themselves (no mean task in such territory where all their clothes and much of their food had to be sent from England), and run all their missionary activities.



Mary Livingstone cooked, taught her native servants to read and write (and as fast as they learned to do so she would take on others who were illiterate and repeat the process), ran a large daily class for the African villagers, and taught her own children their lessons. She sewed all their clothes and even made their candles. The cost of having goods sent from the coast was so enormous that they were half starved and on one occasion reduced to eating mice. "Locusts are the most constipating food I ever ate," Livingstone wrote to his brother in 1843. "... They taste exactly like the vegetation on which they subsist." When it came to ordering clothes to be sent from England they could only afford absolute necessities. What were then considered absolute necessities may be understood from the details of this order which Mary Livingstone sent to London in 1842:

One piece of good red flannel suitable for children's underwear.  
One dozen pairs of female stockings of which six pairs must be woollen.

One dozen pairs of stockings for a child of four.

Another dozen pairs of stockings for a child of three.

Small shawls.

In such heavy clothes and woollen stockings, pregnant with their fourth child, she went with her husband and their three young children through fever-stricken unexplored territory to discover Lake Ngambi. The discovery of this lake caused great excitement in England. In due course Queen Victoria sent the missionary the sum of twenty-five guineas to mark her interest and approval of his work. Whereupon the hungry missionary informed his brother in Scotland, bitterly: "It is from the Queen. You must be very loyal all of you. Next time she comes your way shout till you are hoarse."

Livingstone wrote: "The caffers always go stark naked. I have seen the men stand in the presence of European females with as little consciousness of impropriety as G.D. does with his trousers on. The Matabele too go in *puris naturalibus* and one and all of them wonder what makes us thrust our pins into bags which can only hinder us from running fast."

Throughout the nineteenth century the wives and daughters of British Army administrators and officers (not to speak of the

troops) in parts of India where native women wore the thinnest muslins, dressed themselves in the fashionable English Victorian styles, which were tight and cumbersome enough to cause much ill-health even in temperate England.



#### AZTEC PRIESTLY DRESS

Arraying an Aztec priest in the costume of Xipe, the flayed god, who wears a human skin.

*From the Codex Florentino (early sixteenth century)*

In our own times the explorer and Arabic scholar Gertrude Bell took a wardrobe of smart Mayfair gowns with her when she

set off in 1917 to explore the Arabian desert. When the temperature reached 120 degrees in Baghdad she rode side-saddle, because divided skirts had not yet been thought of. When they were, she hailed them with inexpressible relief. But she would not have dreamed of breaking the conventions in which she had been brought up and wearing something easier to ride in before fashion decreed it *de rigueur* to do so.

Photographs taken of her in the blazing heat of the Iraqi summer show her to be wearing a fashionable long gown, modish large toque with long hatpins, and dark stockings. "Let me announce," she wrote home to England in 1917, "the arrival of two charming hats, chiffon veils, brown stockings. The temperature to-day is 122, but that is nothing here." She goes on to ask for six pairs of dark brown stockings and thanks the sender for two charming black satin gowns.

At the same time she also wrote (of her Iraqi servants): "Their clothes are amazingly unfitted for any job they are likely to undertake, especially struggling through thorns . . . which they beat down with their bare feet."

To-day when women fly across the world in slacks and kerchief her own dress appears to us singularly unsuited for its purpose.

Gertrude Bell, who had the advantage of an excellent education, was one of the early students to reap the benefit of the efforts of the pioneers of female learning in the nineteenth century. Although occasionally in history a girl might be permitted to share her brother's tutor (Queen Elizabeth, for instance, learned Latin and Italian with her brother Edward), the mere idea of a woman being educated was for many centuries so abhorrent to men that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who herself had been obliged to study surreptitiously, advised women to "conceal their learning like a physical defect." A petted only child like Annabella Milbanke, it is true, was permitted the unwomanly folly of learning mathematics, in which she took a perverse delight; but Lord Byron, whose wife she became, never managed to forgive her for it, but brought it up at every quarrel and never ceased to refer to it as long as she lived.

No higher education was possible even for gifted girls until the heroic efforts of such dedicated reformers as Miss Buss and Miss



Beale and Emily Davies managed to force open an inch or two of some sacred doors that had always been slammed in the face of girls who wished to study. It was in a storm of public disapproval that a few daring young ladies, heavily veiled, closely gloved, and grimly chaperoned, crept into lecture-rooms in 1870. "Girls," declared a serious liberal magazine at the time, "are more delicately organized than boys, and intellectual development at the cost of diminished bodily health is a bad bargain."

The site of Girton was carefully chosen far away enough from the men's colleges to appease propriety, for the constant thought in the minds of opponents to female education was that the girls were risking immorality. Much as some Asiatic opponents to female literacy insist that if girls learn to read and write they will only use their skill to pen assignations.

Throughout the seventies the courageous trickle of female undergraduates increased, education being looked upon by them as a Holy Cause, worth incurring the martyrdom it entailed.

These undergraduates were all 'ladies,' and dressed as such for their classes, in the prevailing mode of gripping corsets, high-necked, tightly-buttoned bodices, draped skirts, and cumbersome bustles. Pattern-books quoted Byron and Wordsworth, for some undergraduates liked to make their own clothes, and though some of them scorned preoccupation with their toilet in their battle for higher learning, it was a point of honour to dress in a ladylike way. Gloves were, of course, always worn in the classroom. There were, however ladylike the student, other dangers to be faced by undergraduates besides the danger of 'immorality.' It was a Society mother who complained of her blue-stockings daughter that she "thinks of nothing but Tennyson and Browning and so misses chance after chance."

Some advanced female thinkers had the temerity to suggest that if studying were to be accused of undermining the health of women, gymnasium lessons might improve it, cunningly pleading at the same time that it was advocated "in order to make them better wives and mothers."

One or two brazen lady equestriennes even ventured to ride astride in a riding-habit consisting of a tight, long-waisted fitted jacket, with a bustle, of course, and reaching well down

below the knees, worn over breeches, topboots, and a top-hat. This costume was regarded as an affront to womanhood, and the correspondence columns of the daily Press seethed with irate letters from angry husbands, fathers, and fiancés.

Rules of decorum were strict in order that parents might hand over their daughters to their future husbands in a condition of pristine virtue that no slightest breath of gossip had soiled. Even with the side-saddle, with its long riding-train hooked on to the skirt, there were dangers to beware of: "The long ride home in the November twilight in the company of some member of the Hunt who has become the young lady's cavalier for the time being is not to the taste of many parents," warns the editor of *Manners and Rules of Good Society*

(1902): "chaperonage must of necessity be greatly dispensed with in the hunting field. This is an objection which many fathers advance against their daughters hunting."

Altogether it was much safer, and considerably cheaper, too, to keep the girls at home to arrange the flowers or occupy themselves with a little woolwork.

That virtue, even technical virtue, still commands its price



"SMART TRAVELLING OUTFIT IN CREAM SERGE LINED WITH SILK"

Fashions like this were worn by militant suffragettes. Marshall and Snelgrove Catalogue 1905.

to-day is made plain by the fact that a certain famous Roman surgeon earns enormous fees by performing the delicate operation required to make Society girls who are no longer virgin apparently once again *intacta*. Otherwise these sprigs of nobility could not hope to make the conventional marriages they and their families desire. What makes this surgeon's practice so lucrative is that he frequently is called upon to perform the same operation several times on the same young lady.

Dress-reformers are never popular. The lady author of *Dress, Health, and Beauty* (published in 1878) aroused a hurricane of opposition. She had the audacity to point out that female dress had become an intolerable burden to its wearers. Six to eight thicknesses of material were being commonly carried about by frail women. And that was at least four times the weight that a strong man had to carry about in his clothes. She drew attention to the fact that women were dying under anæsthetics because of their tight clothing (which caused the lungs to be cramped and prevented proper breathing even when the clothing was removed).

Indignant victims of these abuses (measurements: breast 34 inches, waist 24 inches, seat 40 inches) retorted promptly that they would die *without* their corsets.

Her suggestions for dress-reform were based on the conviction that no weight at all should be permitted to rest upon a woman's hips, and that at all times a woman's feet must be warmly protected against chills. She recommended (not altogether disinterestedly, because she guaranteed to supply them herself) the use of patent "shoulder braces"—webbing harnesses with attachments at different levels (rather like a circus trapeze), to hold up the skirt, the stockings, the petticoats, drawers, etc. This contraption was to be bought in two qualities, a sturdy one priced at four shillings and sixpence, a more genteel one at eight shillings. And for children there was a smaller one at three shillings and sixpence.

For winter wear she strongly recommended the wearing of fleece-lined stockings with high-legged boots, and she pleaded particularly for the wearing of good thick soles to ladies' boots all the year round, to avoid the slightest danger of a chill taken through the sensitive soles of the feet.



Another dress-reformer, a male one this time, declared with almost religious fervour:

Cross the boundaries of any civilized Christian land and you behold a race of gasping, nervous, and despairing women who with their compressed hips, torpid lungs, hobbling feet, and bilious stomachs evidently consider it their first duty to mortify the flesh. The present mode exaggerates the bust, humps the hips and pinches the waist.

Other reformers urged the abolition of the corset, short enough skirts to clear the pavements when walking so that the linings and lower edges of the skirts should not blot up the wet on rainy days. (This suggestion, that skirts might just clear the ground, was regarded as most daring and revolutionary.) Red flannel overdrawers were urged for ladies venturing outdoors, and thick boots to avoid the common female ailments of "weakened digestion, impaired health, poor circulation, diseased liver, restless nights, and the whole host of sufferings that follow in the train of outraged nature."

An editor of a reform journal cunningly suggested that trained dresses for street wear obliged the lady wearing it to throw out her elbows unbecomingly when she had to clutch at it with both hands to cross the street, and wound up by piously exhorting his lady readers, "Only give such thought to the clothing of the perishable body as will suffice to render it strong and efficient for carrying out the soul's behests."

Most dress-reformers objected to the chemise as "an absurd and worthless garment," and instead recommended unshrinkable flannel drawers and vests or else woollen combinations reaching snugly from neck to ankle, as few petticoats as possible, but extra drawers instead, preferably of good red flannel.

Dress-reformers of another kind were the *Æsthetes*, who complained that the female garb of 1870 was ugly, not that it was unhealthy. (The pale, languid ladies they set up as an ideal were not healthy either.) The *Æsthetic* dress they launched instead of the bustled dress was long, clinging, limp, with a vague frill round the neck and confusedly medieval sleeves. It was worn without corsets underneath, and was chiefly distinguished by its

melancholy colouring—dull sage green and a dirty peacock blue being particularly favoured. Such was the *Æsthetic* dress worn by William Morris's wife, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's wife, and Burne-Jones's wife. Colours which W. S. Gilbert satirized in *Patience* as "like the bloom on cold gravy." It was by no means the first time in history that women had been invited to throw away their chemises in the name of good sense. The French *Merveilleuses* of 1800 eagerly discarded theirs as "out of date,"



YOUNG GIRL DRAWING A LOADED COAL-TRUCK

From a print of 1842, following the Report of the Royal Commission.

and adopted instead the would-be Greek dress the Revolutionary Government considered "un costume propre au travail obeissante à la ligne."

The dress-reformers of 1890, however, had but scant success, because there were hardly any ladies who could thus be persuaded to throw away their luxurious, beribboned, fashionable lingerie in order to adopt flannel drawers. As to woollen combinations, they were considered very fast indeed and far from respectable.

It was a hard-fought battle, as to some extent it still is, for women to obtain access to the higher professions. Poorer women, not to mention children, had been working in factories without serious objection being raised except by "crank reformers" ever since there had been factories for them to go to work in. In 1871 the Telegraph Office in London was entirely staffed by women employees (in bustles, trailing skirts, and chignons, of course). No one raised the slightest objection. The Government, indeed, was congratulated upon saving money by using

these young and generally well-bred women, an experiment which has answered to perfection. Both the Government and the Public reap the advantage of this since a trustworthy staff is obtained for far smaller salaries than would be paid to a similar class of men.

It was not the exigencies of going out to work for a living which brought about a more practical dress for English women.

It was the advent of the bicycle. Young women from all classes of society took to "the wheel" with enthusiasm. Society ladies drove in their carriages to Battersea Park (where their maids had been sent on ahead with their bicycles to wait for them to arrive), and there they rode round and round the park with their friends. After which bout of healthful exercise they returned home in their carriages, leaving the maids to follow with the bicycles.

Quite poor young women went for bicycle-rides on Saturday afternoons. And no amount of jeering or music-hall jokes affected the new sport in the slightest degree. It had obviously come to stay. Young men who began by sneering at the new pastime ended by buying tandems so that they could ride out with their fiancées, and the only troublesome detail about the activity was that the long bell-shaped walking-skirt worn by



YOUNG GIRL'S WALKING-OUT DRESS  
(1842)



ladies was not only awkward for cycling, but actually dangerous. Was the answer to be breeches?

Mrs Bloomer had tried and failed to introduce the idea of female trousers forty years before. All that happened was that her name was clapped on to a certain type of female underwear. But some bold women in the nineties ventured to try again.

The *Tailor and Cutter* reported in 1894:

Despite the protests of prudes and the amazement of the majority of the inhabitants of these islands, the "new woman" has boldly burst the outward distinction of sex and on every high road in the kingdom disports herself in the unrestricted delights of the breeches.

These breeches were very long (ladies' magazines prudently took to calling them divided skirts), and billowed round the ankles. "A boon and a blessing for cycling. The divided skirt gracefully shrouds the figure."

They had clearly caught on with the lady cyclists. There was, however, one disadvantage which the *Tailor and Cutter* was ungallant enough to point out: "One thing which has led to some embarrassment must be mentioned, and that is the appearance of the rider when dismounted which it must be confessed is as inelegant as it is novel."

To solve this delicate problem an enterprising dressmaker patented a "cape-skirt" which could rapidly be removed from the shoulders and fastened round the waist immediately on dismounting. In Sackville Street a patent cycling-skirt was displayed in the vitrine of a smart tailor. This ingenious invention had a skirt in the front and trousers at the back. The directors of Kew Gardens were more enterprising, and in 1907 ordered their lady gardeners to wear bloomers at work so as to avoid damaging the plants with their trailing skirts.

Even so there were still unpleasant incidents that sometimes arose, and the *Tailor and Cutter* hastened to relate the following authenticated story:

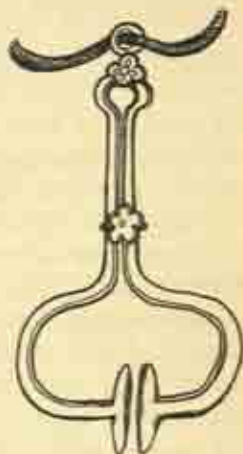
Mrs Wackerbath, a lady decked in a rational dress, was riding a bicycle in Finchley when a passing girl called her a 'devil in trousers.' Mrs Wackerbath promptly jumped off her wheel and onto the supposed offending party whom she dragged across the road by the

hair. Unfortunately she had dragged the wrong party across and was fined three guineas in consequence.

The suffragettes fought their campaigns, stood in the dock, and were hustled into gaol not in the reformed dress, but in the fashionable garments of their period—long-trained skirts which gathered up the dust of the streets and hampered every movement; flounced blouses whose high collars were boned and wired to reach up to the ears; pointed buttoned boots; immense feathered hats skewered to their piled-up coiffures by means of lethal hat-pins; hats of which a doctor said "many invalids who are unable to lift a broom carry weights on their heads that the Humane Society would think cruel if laid on animals." Patent dress-tongs which clipped the train and could be closed in that position had been put on the market. They fastened round the waist on a cord. But they were considered too vulgar for a lady to use. There was much skill in the genteel management of the train when crossing the road which few ladies cared to sacrifice to mere convenience.

The important point about the Suffrage Movement is that it was essentially a middle- and upper-class movement, though many working-class women joined in the campaign and though it was taken up by many radical thinkers. It was regarded as a point of honour to dress like ladies. Thus police brutalities were shown up all the more glaringly. During the suffragette's fights with the police these great hats would be wrenched off their heads, the policemen always trying to tumble down their hair deliberately in order to humiliate them.

The vote was won before a more sanitary dress had come into fashion, and the first women to record their votes triumphantly dragged their long skirts and massive hats to the poll to do so.



PATENT ADJUSTABLE  
TRAIN-HOLDER

Nickel silver, 8 inches  
in length. English, 1900.

Women's Auxiliary Corps services in the 1914-18 War wore ankle-length uniforms.

The tendency during the progress of this war, however, was for skirts to decrease in length. Inch by inch they crept upward, until by 1926 women of all ages, in the Western world at least, wore a dress of a brevity unique in our recorded history.

After a moment of hesitation—"where to put the waist," records *Vogue* in 1916, "is a bit of a problem and occupies much thought. Some dresses have two waist-lines and two belts"—fashion declared firmly for youth, "which," insisted another fashionable journal, "includes women up to 70 as well as young men of 17." A low-waisted style was launched, cut short above the knees. This, it was claimed, was perfectly suitable attire for every job a woman was called upon to do. Short skirt, low waist or no waist, a minimum of underwear, and cropped hair.

"Men and women," announced *Vogue* with truth, "are becoming every year more indistinguishable. There are few things that a man can do that a woman cannot do. Mrs Pankhurst was an omen of Mlle Suzanne Lenglen. The distinction between the sexes has been discovered to be grossly exaggerated." And, again, "with her short hair, her close hat, her straight-cut suit, the modern woman presents a silhouette so boyish that if she is seated sometimes you cannot tell she is not a boy." One gentleman ventured to remark, "The opulent curves associated with the Victorian age have been supplanted by a straight simplicity of design once considered masculine, that makes a morning on the beach confusing, to put it mildly." Henri Bernstein quoted the anecdote of the gentleman who fell in love with a strange lady on the lido and cried, "I love you. I adore you. How I should love to see you dressed!" Another man, younger and more *épris* with the new-shaped woman, wrote firmly, "Short skirts are worn for the same reason as short hair. They are enormously more *convenient*. The attraction of opposites is a delusion. It is more civilized to share a point of view than to impose one."

Civilized. That was the operative word. It was civilized for a girl to wear cuff-links. It was civilized to collect Negro sculpture. It was civilized to be bored, to admire abstract art, to be homosexual, to give bottle-parties, to fly, not to have children, to



furnish an all-white flat with all-white rugs and chill steel furniture. A fashionable photographer exhibited a studio portrait at this time of a civilized, newly married Society couple dressed absolutely alike.

The garish hues of Poiret and the Ballet Russe were replaced by the fashionable beige, that sexless no-colour which is still with us. But there were beiges and beiges. You had to be subtle about choosing which. "The ideal beige," says *Vogue*, "is like a dead pale leaf. Not rosy. Not yellow. But a kind of faintly toasted neutral."

Everything from a cigarette-holder to a motor-car had to be streamlined. "The house," says an architectural magazine, "is designed as a machine for living in just as a motor-car is designed as a machine for driving in. Utility is the governing idea of the designer. He rigorously refuses to make any concession to ornament."

And this machine for living in paid no attention to the nursery, and much less to the kitchen than to the cocktail bar. Dining was a dangerous indulgence, for the long-legged 'troubadour' silhouette did not come naturally to most Englishwomen, as the spate of slimming advertisements testified.

Reducing pastes, facial rejuvenators, special exercisers, patent rubber rolling-pins to whittle down curves, manufactured in two sizes, one for exclusive work on double chins and unsatisfactory ankles, reducing salts, rejuvenating gland extracts, etc.

Exercising became a fetish, and the noblest ladies in the land, under the guidance of highly paid gymnasium instructors, strove to outdo one another in standing on their heads.

Along with exercising went dieting. This was then a revolutionary idea. Until then Society had managed comfortably by eating too much for the greater part of the year and going to Baden annually to work it off in congenial company, with gaming-tables as a distraction. Now rigid dieting took all the pleasure from the table, and not a few Society ladies starved themselves into consumption in their fervour to reduce as fast as possible.

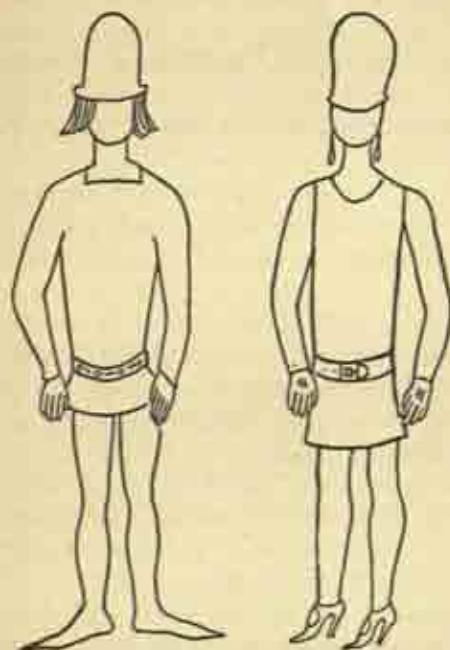
The South of France and the Adriatic Coast became for the first time *summer* resorts, instead of mere escapes for the elderly and

rheumatic from the rigours of the English winter. Society flocked to Juan-les-Pins to bake itself to a smart tan under the savage August sun—lying uncomfortably exposed to its grilling rays on the scorching sands when the natives of these resorts hid themselves behind thick walls to avoid it at all costs.

Noël Coward, a sardonic spectator, reported the scene as one

of frowsty splendour. A Gomorrah!... The sunny sands of the Adriatic close to Venice are peppered with the best people. Every square inch of fine-powdered sand is churned up by the passing of innumerable toes and dented and depressed by sun-blistered bodies. The blazing sun brings out the worst traits of character like a heat rash so that the beach is an excellent place to see how the smart world quarrels.

In the diligent chase after pleasure, relaxation (that goal of the next generation) was unknown. "As soon as



#### THE CULT OF YOUTH

Fourteenth-century page-boy and a young lady of 1926.

we arrive," complains the *Vogue* correspondent in Venice, "we begin the hard work of dressing and undressing. Dressing in pyjamas, drinking, bathing, dressing and the rush to the Piazza, then the rush to dinner, rush to the serenata, rush to dance on a raft moored in the sea . . . rush, rush."

Besides exercising and sunbathing and dieting, it was smart to

patronize the bright new night-clubs where the Bright Young Things danced to Negro rhythms. *Vogue* reported:

This winter the passion is for being all crowded up together in small rooms for dancing on the tiniest floors surrounded by a sea of supper-tables. It falls in well with the new dance Black Bottom. Swing, kick, stamp, stamp, kick, shuffle, stamp across, all on the same yard of floor.

Ah, me, what it means in new shoes. First we ruined the sides with the foxtrot. Then the soles wore out with the Charleston. Now comes the Black Bottom with its stamp and drag of the heels. Altogether this rage to keep up with Florence Mills costs us a pretty penny.

Three years later skirts began to lengthen at the back, and young women all over Europe were frantically pinning postiches on to their shingled hair. By the outbreak of the Second World War the waist had returned to normal and the bosom was again in fashion.

From having it as short as a schoolboy's, women grew their hair to shoulder-length, and the streaming tresses of the A.T.S. caused many tears on the parade ground. Wearing a snood was difficult to enforce in the Army at a time when it was smart in civilian life to leave the hair flowing.

A significant outcome of the Second World War has been the short evening dress, a fashion unknown since the mid-twenties. This is a style which may be equally attributed to the influence of the ballet and the shortage of cars. A new class has come into being, the *nouveau pauvre*—middle-class, often upper-class, people educated to expensive tastes which they now have not the income to enjoy. A shrinking Empire, astronomic taxation, and a catastrophic rise in the cost of living has necessitated such expedients as giving up smoking, never hiring taxis, taking lodgers into homes where once two or three maids were regarded as essential. The last privilege to be given up is education, and these good people are to-day wondering whether it is worth the sacrifice to send their children to the kind of schools they went to themselves if it will only result in giving them expensive tastes which they will never have the remotest chance of gratifying.



So the short evening dress. It can be walked home in even on a wet night.

Can it be that women are learning hard sense? Certainly, unlike the corseted bathing suits once worn, modern bathing suits are made for swimming in. Modern lingerie is pretty, and at the same time not a *corvée* to launder.

Only in one item of dress can present-day women's wear be criticized on the grounds of causing discomfort. A glance in any shoe-shop reveals the fact that a great many shoes are not designed to comfort but to cripple the feet. Foot-specialists inform us that nine out of every ten women have imperfect feet, caused by wearing over-high heels and insufficiently long shoes. Doctors are busy continually coping with a trail of ailments due to faulty posture, due to the wrong kind of shoes, worn both at work and at home. Especially is this true about poorer people, who cannot afford to spend the money to be properly fitted, but buy whatever their purse can run to that looks pretty.

Most present-day shoes make no provision at all for the big toe, the curve on the inner side of the sole being the same as on the outer. This causes all sorts of complications. The Greeks and Romans, the Indians, all primitive peoples, allow room in their sandals for the big toe to be separated by a special thong from the other four toes, and the Japanese even have a big toe pocket in their white stockings.

There is only a difference of degree between the ancient Chinese practice of deforming the female foot by means of a process of binding from infancy and our own high-heel fetish. In both cases the object of the exercise is to produce an unsteady restricted totter instead of a normal stride. This totter is to excite sexual appetite in the male onlooker.

Fortunately, a move in the opposite direction has been taken by many young people who to-day wear absolutely flat shoes, based on the shape of ballet slippers. These flat shoes, though they do not strain the ankle or deform the toes, err if anything in not providing any support at all for the instep, though they do permit a natural walk and, by not forcing the muscles of the calves into rigidity, allow the leg to retain its normal shape.

This chapter would not be complete without some reference to mourning costume.

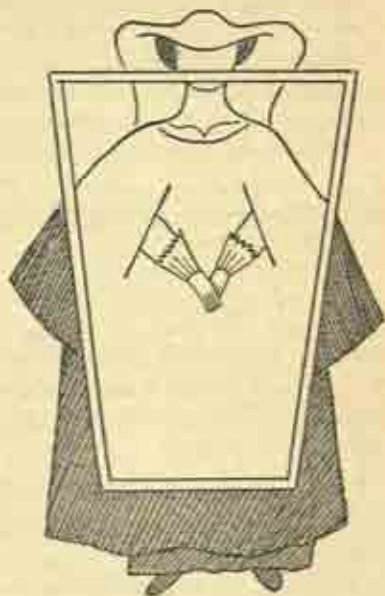
Sackcloth was worn in early times to irritate the skin. The Egyptian colour for mourning was yellow, the Greek black. In the Middle Ages brown and purple were used as well as black.

Sumptuary laws were enacted to cover mourning dresses equally with ordinary wear. Before newspapers were invented obituary notices were served by means of employing the corporation Death Cryer, an official who patrolled the streets in a black livery painted and embroidered with skulls and cross-bones, who had the duty of crying news of the death of a person.

Mourning was worn according to strict rules regulating the amount of *deuil* and the length of time it was to be worn. We have mentioned widows' "barbes" in the first chapter. In the nineteenth century men in mourning wore bands of felt on their hats of various depths according to the quantity of woe it was appropriate to display.

The anonymous British author of *Costume of Indostan*, published in 1799, remarks:

By Hindu laws a widow cannot marry again, and therefore in order to subdue her passions and deprive her of personal attraction she is stripped of every ornament and reduced to a state of servility. Happily this odious interdiction and not less odious custom are



MOURNING WEAR

German widow wearing starched muslin "barbe" stretched on copper-wire frame shaped into coffin-lid. Augsburg, 1687.

unknown to the fair daughters of Europe, who are unrestrained in the exercise of their charms and are ever free to confer those blessings that constitute the happiness of man.

An etiquette book published in 1902 gives the following table of mourning periods:

*Widow:* two years, crepe trimming for one year, a year and a day for wearing a widow's cap and veil. Lawn cuffs and collar one year more. After one year jet and gold ornaments might be worn. Diamonds a little earlier.

*Parent:* twelve months mourning for a parent, ten months unrelieved black, two months half-mourning.

*Infants:* six or even three months.

*Stepmother:* according to the length of the marriage and whether the step-children resided with her or not. Usually six to twelve months mourning.

*First cousin:* six weeks mourning.

*Second cousin:* three weeks mourning.

*Parents of a first wife* should be mourned three months by the second wife, black with jet trimmings is advised.

Servants should wear the same mourning for the same period as their employers, besides any other mourning they have need for their own families.

It will be seen that, with such a scale of necessary *deuil* and taking into account the very large families of the time and the number of children who died young, many people were scarcely ever out of mourning for years on end, and even little children wore a great deal of black.

All primitive peoples have complicated rituals for mourning their dead, much of which is to propitiate the dead person's spirit that it might not do the survivors mischief. Certain magic ornaments are worn in mourning for this purpose.

The traveller Nissen, in Germany in the seventeenth century, reported and sketched a curious form of mourning which was worn in Augsburg by bourgeois widows of the Roman Catholic faith.

A white muslin *couvre-chef*, well-starched with wings and horns. An oblong of starched muslin four feet long by two feet wide stretched stiffly on a frame of copper wire and worn suspended below the lip covering the figure almost to the feet. It closely resembles the glass lid of a coffin.



#### CHAPTER FOUR

### BEARDS AND MOUSTACHES, COSMETICS AND PATCHES

La rouge peut être regardée comme la loi et les prophètes. C'est tout le christianisme.

*Mme de Sévigné (1670)*

THE Ancients regarded the beard as a sacred token of virility, and Jewish Elders instituted a strict law forbidding the shaving of "the four corners of the face" as blasphemous. This law, still observed by many devout Jews in exile, has been the cause of endless difficulties, since the Western world has preferred clean-shaving. Various expedients, such as caustic pastes, have been resorted to in the effort to remove hair from the chin while complying with the letter of the law by not touching the chin with a razor.

Beards were held in such esteem in Babylon that no oath was considered legal and binding unless sworn on one. They were arranged in careful tiers of circular curls and stiffened by perfumed gum. Even the sacred winged bull of the Assyrians was bearded.

The ancient Egyptians shaved closely, but on occasions of State the Pharaoh assumed a narrow, plaited false beard which was strapped on to his chin. In time this false beard developed into a conventional gold rectangle.

The Egyptians, a highly sophisticated



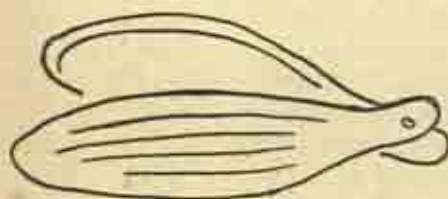
ASSYRIAN BEARD

From a relief on the  
palace of Assur Naser  
Pal, King of Assyria,  
885-860 B.C.

race, used more cosmetics than any other ancient peoples, certainly more than we do to-day, for Egyptian men also used make-up, men of all ages painting their eyebrows and eyes with antimony, malachite, and kohl.

Henna in enormous quantities was imported into Egypt for ladies to use on their lips, faces, nails, and feet. A bright-blue paint was sold for outlining the veins on the breast and temples—a practice regarded as so elegant that it was in time copied by Roman ladies, both those who were respectable and those who were not.

Cosmetics were as freely used in ancient Greece by men as by women. Xenophon thought it worth mentioning that in his day virtuous married women used cosmetics as lavishly as the hetærae. Jewish moralists, however, were alarmed when the women of



GREEN-GLAZED WOODEN COSMETIC-BOX  
IN THE FORM OF A CUCUMBER

Egyptian, 1250 B.C.

Israel began to copy their worldly neighbours and paint their eyes and their veins. Jeremiah denounced them in bitter words: "In vain do you paint your eyes with antimony. Your lovers will scorn you."

In ancient Greece beards were commonly worn by older men, younger ones shaving. A tooth-powder which was popularly used by Greek women was made from pumice-stone ground in babies' urine. Eye-cosmetic was employed on a large scale to increase and widen the apparent size of the eyes, so as to resemble the appealing "ox-eyes" described by Homer as Juno's great beauty.

Romans of both sexes made use of oxide of lead, chalk, black and blue paints, milk, and vermilion on their faces. Under Augustus the use of white make-up was restricted to patricians, but, like so many similar laws, it soon ceased to operate, and everybody who could afford to buy cosmetics made lavish use of them.

Lucian accused the women of Rome not only of wearing false hair and using cosmetics, but even of wearing false teeth made of wax. "A mask," he sneered, "would be cheaper." Martial wrote of the Empress Messalina: "Her toilet table contained a hundred lies, and whilst she was in Rome her hair was blushing by the Rhine. A man was in no condition to say he loved her, for what he loved in her was not herself, and that which was herself was impossible to love."

The Empress Plotina's personal physician wrote a popular treatise on cosmetics, giving twenty-five different recipes for pommades and essences. The Empress Poppæa herself invented a new face-cream made from bread and asses' milk which Juvenal complained stuck like glue to the faces of husbands whose wives employed it. Ovid recommended crocodile excrement as admirable for giving a fresh complexion.

Alexander the Great shaved the better to display his profile, and commanded his troops to lop off their beards similarly as a military precaution, "to remove the handle which the enemy can seize." The Roman soldiers continued the practice of clean-shaving and were startled on landing in Britain to find the native Britons wearing long moustaches dyed green and blue, "drooping like wings on their breasts." Roman soldiers regarded the British natives as barbarian; but Boudicca mocked the Roman invaders as soft and effeminate, because they liked warm water to bathe in and because they shaved their faces.

The early Christian moralists were as violently opposed to make-up as the Jewish moralists, and threatened hell-fire on such transgressors. St Jerome denounced "women who paint their faces with red paint and smear their eyes with black, and whose plastered cheeks, hideously white, look like idols hiding their wrinkles under simulated youth. If a tear should fall on the cheeks it would cut a furrow." And St Cyprian threatened women who used cosmetics with certain hell because their faces would not be recognizable under the paint.

Duke William's Norman soldiers shaved not only their faces but also the back of their heads, a fashion which so confused King Harold's spies that they unwittingly helped to contribute to his defeat by reporting to him that Duke William had no army but



merely a band of priests "tout rez et tondu." After the Conquest William made shaving compulsory in England, perhaps as a humiliation.

Norman knights rode off to the Crusades clean-shaven, though not infrequently they returned with Saracenic beards and moustaches, which Oriental style provoked Bishop Serle into a fury of denunciation. He called them "filthy goats." There were other disadvantages, too. During the night attack on Antioch not a few bearded Crusaders killed each other in mistake for Saracens.



THE SARACENIC MOUSTACHES

Edward, the Black Prince. From his effigy in Canterbury Cathedral, 1376.



THE DOUBLE-POINTED BEARD

King Richard II. After a portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, about 1390.

The English, notwithstanding Norman habits and the diatribes of French priests, retained their fundamental love for a hairy face, which, in common with the Oriental, they believed essential to manly dignity. As soon as they dared they began to cultivate beards and moustaches again.

Richard II and Chaucer both favoured the double-pointed Gothic beard, and the effigy of the Black Prince depicts him wearing drooping moustaches outside his chain-mail.

Christopher Columbus was astonished to find the natives of the New World using cosmetics, which was a practice restricted in his country to women, and women of ill-fame only. He reported: "Some natives paint themselves in white and red or other colours; either the entire body or just the face, the eyes or only the nose," and he was naïve enough to suggest that such make-up might be intended for protection against the sun.

The Court of Henry III of France was singular for its time in that his male courtiers used as much *maquillage* as the Court ladies. He was, however, a well-known homosexual.

Though Henry VII was clean-shaven, Henry VIII brought in the square Tudor beard. He was liberal-minded to the extent that the gentlemen of his Court were permitted to wear their hair as they chose, and though many of them adroitly preferred to copy their monarch in wearing a short square beard, there were also many other varieties. Thomas More was clean-shaven, the Earl of Bedford wore a heavy beard, Baron Wentworth wore a long pointed beard, Sir Gavin Carew a long double-pointed beard, Sir William Sharrington a long rounded beard. There was even the fashion for wearing only a moustache with the merest few hairs on the chin.

Such liberality, however, was not extended to Henry's Irish subjects, who in 1539 were sternly forbidden to grow moustaches or beards.

But it was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth that the cultivation of the beard reached its zenith. Not even in Victorian days was so much time and money spent upon its proper toilet. Elizabethan gallants often spent the entire day at the barber's, smoking the newly introduced tobacco, scribbling verses, exchanging gossip, and in general treating the shop as a club while waiting their turn.

The Elizabethan barber stiffened and perfumed his client's beard, dyed it a fashionable red (a compliment to the Queen), curled it with hot irons, and finally moulded it in one of a large variety of styles. It might be twisted like a stick of barley sugar—pointed, double-pointed, cut square, round, oblong. It might be shaped into the "T-beard," thus described in the *Queen of Corinth*:

His beard which now he doth put i' the form of a T,  
Your Roman T, your T beard is the fashion,  
And two-fold doth express the enamoured Courtier.

Beards were cut in the French mode, the Italian, the Spanish. And when the Elizabethan gentleman went to his four-poster bed at night he carefully tucked his beard into a wooden container supplied by his barber to prevent it from being accidentally ruffled.

"When you come to be trimmed," complained Philip Stubbes, "they [the barbers] will ask you whether you will be cut to look terrible to your enemies or amiable to your friends."

Queen Elizabeth used cosmetics in large quantities. Ambassadors reported to their Governments that her make-up was so thick that it was impossible to see or even guess the expression on her face. And the older she became the more paint she used. A poet after her death sneered at the "ointments wherewith she pargetted o'er her face."

Charles I set the fashion for wearing a pair of sharply upturned moustaches in conjunction with a dagger-pointed beard—doubtless to make himself look fiercer or at least more resolute than his vacillating character and feeble health permitted him to be. The Puritans, to underline their disapproval of the King and his Court, grew the merest dab of beard only. Some Puritans went so far as to shave clean, but this was not encouraged because it resembled the Catholic priest.

At the Restoration cosmetics once more became stylish, and both sexes used lavish quantities at Court. The face-patch which Cromwell had banned now became immensely popular. In France, of course, cosmetics had never gone out of favour. As early as 1593 l'Estoile reports that even the nuns in Paris walked about the streets "*fardées, maquillées, et poudrées*." When Henrietta, daughter of Louis XV, died she was powdered and rouged for her funeral as heavily as she had been in real life, though she was only a girl—a curious anticipation of the modern American practice.

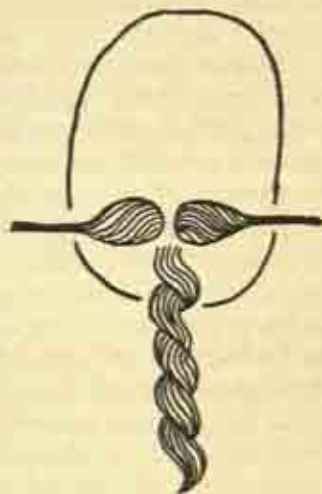
Captain Cook wrote in his log in 1769, upon arrival in what is now called New Zealand: "The native women paint their faces with red ochre and oil which is generally so moist as to make an



imprint on anyone who embraces them. Many of our sailors were thus marked on the nose."

Charles II popularized what we call to-day the 'spiv' moustache, the hairline on the upper lip that ended the reign of beards and moustaches for well over a century—for periwigs, which came in with his return from exile, looked best with a shorn face, and consequently beards did not return to favour until the reign of Queen Victoria.

Peter the Great of Russia, in his efforts to Westernize his stubborn subjects, clapped a tax on their beards. Merchants and officials who refused to shave were fined 100 roubles, Boyars 50 roubles for wearing a beard, and ordinary Moscow citizens 30 roubles. But as the money this yielded was of less account to him than the imposition of the principle, Peter was known to stride about his Court armed with a pair of shears to enforce his progressive ideas.



FASHION IN BEARDS, 1600

He was an extraordinary personality, who much preferred the society of common sailors to that of fine gentlemen, and scandalized the English Court of William III during his visit to London by constantly disappearing from State receptions to make his way to the docks. Nor was the English King mollified by Peter's present of an enormous ruby, which Peter handed over to him without ceremony carelessly wrapped in a piece of brown paper.

Evelyn rented his London house to Peter and his entourage, all wild and uncouth, and they made such a mess of it that Evelyn indignantly sent him an enormous bill afterwards for damages. Such was the Tsar who gave Russia her first navy, who liked to work with his hands and made his own metal buttons, who packed off his first royal wife to a convent because she bored him, and took

*en deuxième nocés* his cook, a fat and good-natured peasant woman, with whom he lived in great happiness.

Even after the French Revolution had brought wigs into disfavour in France and gradually in the rest of Europe, the long reign of the shorn face was not so soon brought to an end. The change began timidly with longer hair and sideburns early in the nineteenth century; but the moustache did not reappear properly until the mid-thirties, when it was usually combined with side-whiskers or a neat flue-brush beard worn beneath the chin, outlining but not in any way concealing the face.

The last French Court before the Revolution had used lavish amounts of cosmetics. Even as a young girl Marie-Antoinette painted her face heavily. The Empress Josephine (no longer in her first youth when she married Napoleon, and with a naturally poor complexion) was so addicted to the use of rouge that Napoleon obliged all the ladies of his Court to rouge similarly, summarily dismissing any lady-in-waiting who had not made up her face heavily enough with the abrupt remark: "Allez mettre du rouge! Vous avez l'air d'un cadavre."

All this changed completely with the Romantic movement, when it was fashionable to look interestingly ill. Ladies then used dead-white make-up, and vast quantities of *poudre de riz* were in demand to aid their efforts to attain this "air d'un cadavre."

Patches, sometimes in large numbers, were worn by both sexes in the eighteenth century. They were by no means always placed on the face, but also on the neck, bosom, and arms, wherever it was desired to attract the eye—in the direction of a particular charm usually, though they were also much in demand to cover pimples. Ladies and gentlemen also wore patches to indicate their political convictions. Whigs wore patches on the right cheek only. Tories on the left cheek only. Neutrals wore patches on both cheeks.

Patches were usually cut out of silk or velvet in all kinds of shapes which called for much skill and ingenuity. The patches took their name from their position on the face or whichever part of the body they adorned—"la sympathie," "la majestueuse," "l'enchanteresse," etc. The Marquise de Zénobia was reported on one occasion to have attended a party with sixteen patches on



her face, one of which was cut in the shape of a tree on which perched two kissing love-birds. Other ladies of High Society fancied patches in the shape of tiny silhouettes of their families.

Patch-boxes made graceful presents, particularly as they could be as costly as snuff-boxes. It was customary to decorate them with sentimental mottoes. A delicate blue enamel patch-box reads:

If you seek what's fair and kind  
Look in this box, the prize you'll find.

Another patch-box in pink enamel adorned with dancing figures is inscribed to "the girl I love and the friend I can trust."

As the nineteenth century progressed the modest whiskers and sideburns grew thicker and heavier. By the middle of the century there did not appear to be any young men left at all. It was every youth's dearest wish to grow a heavy beard as soon as possible. Understandable enough in an age when the father held such absolute financial and moral power over his family, when young ladies were more closely chaperoned than in a nunnery, and having a mistress (the frequent practice, for most respectable wives were almost continually pregnant) was a costly business, for she had to be 'set up' in an establishment of her own with her own servants, coachmen, etc. There are many little streets in London, built about 1840 or 1850, for such special purposes—streets bearing such names as Cora Street or Gertrude Road, of neat small houses containing two rooms downstairs for drawing-room and dining-room, and two bedrooms upstairs, one bedroom for the mistress and another for the maid.

Charles Dickens, so typical of his own time, supervised as a young man the growth of his whiskers with extreme delight and impatience. He wrote in a letter in 1844 to his friend Maclise from Italy: "The moustaches are glorious, glorious. I have cut them shorter and trimmed them a little at the ends to improve their shape. They are charming, charming. Without them life would be a blank." By the seventies he had grown so long and bushy a beard that he looked like a Biblical prophet. So did Tennyson. So did W. G. Grace. So did Darwin. So did every one's own father. Such an appearance must have greatly added to the panoply of parental authority.



An American manual of etiquette published in New York in 1855 had this to say about the beard:

Ten years ago though a full beard in New York was stared and sneered at as a mark of ultra radicalism, the full beard is the most natural, comfortable, most expressive, dignified, and beautiful. Nature gave man a beard for use and beauty. In manly ideal we claim the beard. The Gods and Heroes wore beards. There is also no doubt that the beard is a great protection to the teeth and throat under the rough exposures to which the sterner sex are liable.

It was not until the mid-eighties that a few daring young dandies began shaving off their whiskers and beard, retaining only the moustache. This fashion, even for the younger man, was considered so audacious that shop-assistants throughout the British Isles were sternly forbidden the wearing of moustaches, under penalty of heavy fines and instant dismissal by their outraged employers. It was a time when shop-assistants had to 'live-in,' sleeping in dormitories on the premises, and having a certain proportion of their wages stopped for the food and accommodation provided by their employers. They were subject to endless rules and restrictions. But none roused such bitterness as the rule against moustaches. In France as late as 1907 there was a strike of waiters fighting for the right to wear a moustache.



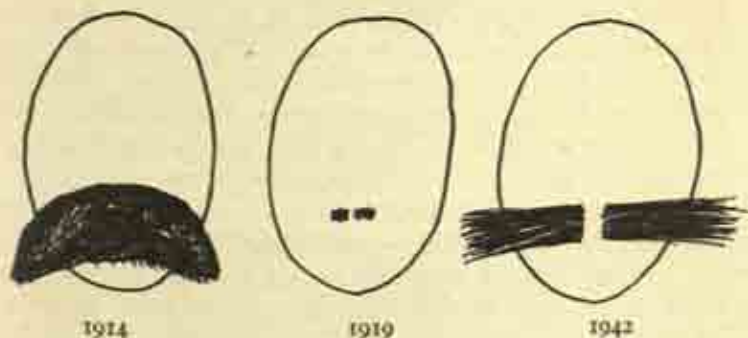
FASHION IN BEARDS, 1855

The moustache (for so it should be described when a single entity, more properly as moustaches in the plural when divided into two separate parts each combed in opposite directions) at last gained the day. It was the typical wear for Englishmen at the greatest period of expansion and prosperity of the British Empire. Rudyard Kipling, and the able and manly administrators of India and South Africa whom he eulogized so elo-

quently, wore a heavy, mouth-concealing moustache. It was this moustache that they took into the First World War with Lord Kitchener and "Old Bill" (the immortal infantry soldier in Bruce Bairnsfather's famous war-cartoons).

During its forty years' reign this heavy moustache lent itself to a variety of styles. Prussian militarists turned up the ends fiercely like two bayonet-points. English men-about-town waxed the ends into sideways twists with perfumed pomade, which became as necessary an adjunct to their toilet as the button-hook to fasten up their spats. Sportsmen favoured drooping moustaches, easier no doubt to keep trim on wet North Country moors.

The size and weight of the heavy moustache, which was *de rigueur* all over Europe, though only in this country, perhaps, did it reach its fullest glory, necessitated a protracted toilet and led to the invention of the 'moustache-cup,' which contained a china bridge half-way across the inside, the purpose of which was to hold back the moustache from contact with the liquid contents.



MILITARY MOUSTACHES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This heavy moustache went gallantly into the 1914 War, not knowing what it was all about, but determined to see it through. What came out of the War was something quite different—the tooth-brush moustache of the young subaltern, the gay, ignorant baby officer with his dandified little cane, who bore the brunt of the massacres of the Somme and Ypres, and who, with soldiers

of other ranks, was killed in such numbers that almost a whole generation of men was wiped out of our national life.

Nothing man wears is an accident. He dresses in sympathy with his age. Cracks had appeared in the mighty British Empire. Money was tight. There was unemployment on a menacing scale. The heavily moustached father had run an Empire very successfully from his own point of view. It had given him a comfortable income and a solid house in Tonbridge. The son carried his absurd tooth-brush moustache through his demob. into unemployment. How many young ex-officers were trying to sell carpet-sweepers on commission for years after the War had ended? There was no room for them in India. There was a depression in rubber, and nobody wanted to buy African coffee or Rhodesian tobacco. That tooth-brush moustache, with its suggestion of crazy courage and despairing impudence, is the authentic mark of two very different, very typical figures of our era, Charlie Chaplin and Adolf Hitler—the one the perfect symbol of the little man with genteel aspirations and no prospects, the other the essence of a war-maddened national lust for empire.

There is something in the psychology of war which favours the growth of moustaches, even beards. What came out of the 1939 War was quite a different kind of moustache. Just as the Crusades fostered the Saracenic moustache, the Napoleonic wars encouraged sideburns, the Crimean War shaggy beards, and the South African War the heavy moustache, so the moustache of the triumphant Eighth Army has been the 'El Alamein Desert-rat' moustache, aggressively outstanding straight moustaches which have no parallel in history. They belong only to themselves and to the men who cultivated them in the desert, and often still do in private life.

To-day—except in the Royal Navy, whose regulations forbid the wearing of moustaches alone, the rule being either clean shaving or a 'full set'—moustaches are considered conventional by many men who regard a beard as showing a deplorable lapse into Bohemianism.

During most of the nineteenth century, coinciding pretty closely with the accession of Queen Victoria, cosmetics were the brand of the harlot, and even the use of a little face-powder was





*Left: PETER THE GREAT'S ANTI-BEARD LAW*

Russian woodcut, early eighteenth century.

The Law-breaking Man says: "Hurry up, barber! Cut off the beard, or, mark my words, I'll knock your eye out!"

*Right: MOUSTACHE, 1887*

# HAIRDRESSING



MACARONI

From an eighteenth-century caricature.



HAIRDRESSER'S WAX WINDOW-MODEL, 1920

thought extremely forward. There is a significant passage in *Little Women* (written in the sixties) where Meg, the pretty daughter of an honourable, poor, liberal-minded professional family of Americans, being invited to stay with rich and worldly friends, is induced to allow herself to have her face lightly powdered for a ball. She is so ashamed of this lapse from virtue afterwards that she cannot forgive herself, but cries her heart out.



PAINTED CLAY PERFUME-POT

Rhodes, 620 B.C.

*Little Women* is contemporary with *Through the Looking-glass*. It is impossible to conceive of Alice's elder sister (coming from much the same sort of family, the author, Lewis Carroll, being a clergyman-university-don) allowing herself even to dream of using face-powder in England at that date.

It was not until after the accession of King Edward VII that a little discreet face-powder ceased to be regarded as absolutely satanic by the middle classes of this country, whose wives and daughters, however, even though they knew and forgave their beloved Queen Alexandra for using a modest amount of make-up, could not bring themselves to do the same.



It was the 1914 War which broke down this stronghold of virtue, as it broke down so many other conventions. To-day face-powder, rouge, lipstick, eye-shadow, and mascara are so universally used that an unpainted face in the street is most unusual. Cosmetics were used as a matter of course by the women in the Services, from the newest recruit to the most important senior commandant in the Second World War.

The manufacture and sale of cosmetics to-day has become an enormous and highly lucrative industry from which a vast number of employees obtain their livelihood by manufacturing, packing, distributing, advertising, and retailing these now essential aids to what we call beauty.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HAIRDRESSING AND WIGS

paws of dog—one part  
kernels of date—one part  
hoof of donkey—one part

Cook these ingredients very thoroughly in an earthenware pot and anoint the head.

*Ancient Egyptian prescription to prevent grey hair.*

WIGS have been worn since earliest recorded times. In ancient Egypt shaving the head was universal, and wigs were worn by every one except slaves and priests—in the Old Kingdom short wigs and in the New Kingdom wigs so large as to be top-heavy. These wigs were usually made out of black or dark brown sheep wool, ornamented as richly as the wearer could afford—decorative beads for the rich, gold and jewels for the Pharaoh, who in addition wore a high crown to proclaim both his divinity and the extent of his dominions.

Alexander the Great thought it politically profitable to undergo the Egyptian ceremony of rebirth as the Son of Ammon, which entitled him to wear the sacred horns of the Ram of Thebes.

It is from the tombs of ancient Egypt as much as from sculpture and wall-painting that we have learned of the importance of wigs in Egyptian life. Wigs of fabulous cost were interred with the wealthy dead, and, though many of these extravagant wigs had already been looted before archaeologists could discover and protect them, a considerable number have been brought to light. For instance, the mummy of a rich Egyptian of the twenty-sixth dynasty was found adorned with a golden mask and a gold-striped wig of pure silver.

Egyptians only permitted their hair to grow when in mourning. During these periods they paid the closest attention to its condition, anointing it with perfumed oils and using prescribed tonics to prevent it from going grey or falling out. The extreme heat of the

Egyptian climate made the use of lubricants a constant necessity, and at dinner-parties it was the custom for slaves to set a cake of



EGYPTIAN ATTENDANT AT  
A BANQUET

She wears a cake of perfumed wax on her wig to keep her cool as it melts. She is handing water and towel to a guest. Egypt, Middle Kingdom.

perfumed wax adorned with a lotus blossom upon the head of each guest so that during the course of the evening it would afford a pleasant coolness to the head in melting.

The Ancients looked upon hair as the source of strength and magic power. Primitives still do. Rain-makers in the region of the Zambezi carefully refrain from cutting their hair lest their magic power should thereby be diminished. The story of Samson explains clearly how the Hebrews also believed the strength of man to dwell in his hair. Is it not possibly an echo of this old superstition which lies behind our present-day practice of cropping the hair of convicts?

In ancient Greece wigs were the fashionable wear, and Greek ladies, led by the *hetærae*, dressed their wigs in a variety of exquisite styles which throughout history are

periodically being copied. Both sexes also wore wreaths of flowers. They were so popular that Aristophanes was careful to include them among the amenities of his Utopia: "Nobody will



be poor. Everybody will have everything he wants. Bread, salt-fish, barley cakes, clothes, wine, chickpeas, and garlands." Sometimes these garlands were made of gold and jewels instead of flowers. Diadems and crowns of precious metals were often worn by Greek ladies of wealth. These were closely copied in wickerwork and worn by the less wealthy.

In Rome wigs were worn by both sexes. They were so important an item of dress that some Roman portrait busts have removable stone wigs, like lids, to allow for changes of fashion.

A yellow wig was obligatory wear (enforced by severe police regulations) for prostitutes, who were licensed and taxed. Once registered, their names were never erased from the police lists. They could either wear a yellow wig or dye their own hair yellow, which some preferred to do. But luxury so demoralized Rome that yellow hair became fashionable for ladies in Society, especially after Messalina assumed a yellow wig for her visits to brothels. The fashion spread until almost every woman who had any social pretensions at all sported yellow hair. In order to supply this passion enormous quantities of blonde hair were regularly imported from Germany.

Dyeing the hair was a common practice in Rome. Ovid somewhat tactlessly reproached a lady who had thus ruined her hair with these words: "Your own hand has been the cause of the loss you deplore. You poured the poison on your own head. Now Germany will send you slaves' hair. A vanquished nation will supply your ornament."

Martial was still more cruel. To a Roman beauty he wrote:



MARBLE BUST OF JULIA,  
WIFE OF THE EMPEROR  
SEVERUS

The stone wig is removable to allow for replacement as the fashions changed. Roman, A.D. 189.

While you are at home, your hair is at the hairdresser, who each morning brings you your eyebrows. Every evening you take out your teeth when you undress. Your charms are kept in a hundred different pots, and your face doesn't go to bed with you.

The Empress Faustina, who presently set the fashions, owned several hundred wigs of different hues.

By the twelfth century A.D. bishops were protesting against the vanity of men growing long hair, and most priests carried scissors about with them summarily to lop off any male locks they considered longer in length than they should have been.

Henry I of France had his hair sheared publicly in the parish church of Charentin, in Normandy. Bishop Serle, having bitterly upbraided the King and his courtiers for wearing their hair as long as women and thus resembling Saracens, reduced them all to tears by his eloquence, and while they wept pulled a pair of scissors from his sleeves and seized the opportunity to snip off the King's tresses and the long locks of his courtiers. The Bishop then encouraged them all to stamp on their shorn hair in repentance.

Through the Middle Ages long fair hair was so greatly esteemed that those ladies not thus favoured by nature resorted to dyeing their dark hair with saffron and artificially lengthening it with false hair and ribbons, despite the bitter protests of their spiritual advisers. Chaucer thus describes Emelye in his Knight's Tale:

Hir yelow heer was brayded in a tresse  
Behinde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.

Until the sixteenth century crowns were not confined to royalty, but worn by men and women in whatever costly quality they could afford, and frequently more than they could afford. These coronets were beautifully ornamented with jewelled flowers and leaves, and young girls wore coronets made of real flowers.

From the moment the Church insisted upon women covering their hair, for the sight of hair was considered a dangerous temptation to men, women of all ages wore some kind of covering on their heads indoors, a practice which continued without interruption until our present century.

Wigs were worn occasionally in the reign of Henry VIII, who

bought a wig which cost him five pounds for his jester Sexton. By the time Elizabeth came to the throne 'attires' formed an indispensable part of the wardrobe of every fashionable lady and not a few gentlemen. These wigs were most frequently dyed red or yellow as a compliment to the Queen, who had red hair, and who herself owned at least eighty wigs.

It is recorded that Mary Queen of Scots, by then a "large lame woman," wore a wig at her execution, and that when the executioner held up the severed head for the crowd to see, the wig tumbled off, revealing but a few wisps of grey hair.

Henry IV of France it was who began the practice of using hair powder. He applied dark powder to his greying hair. Louis XIII of France introduced the periwig, for he had the misfortune to go prematurely bald in 1624, at the age of twenty-three. Louis XIV as a child had such beautiful

long fair hair that his courtiers began to wear yellow wigs as a compliment to him, and when he grew up he adopted the periwig himself. In his old age the Sun King took to wearing an enormous wig, thickly powdered with perfumed white powder, a practice sedulously copied by his Court.

"Tout le monde veut être vieux pour paraître sage," explained a diplomatic lady-in-waiting to a foreign Ambassador who was surprised to find even the youngest ladies of the Court in white wigs. The barbers, to whom the new fashion brought a fortune,



BEATRICE D'ESTE, WIFE OF  
LODOVICO SFORZA, DUKE OF  
MILAN

Italian, end of fifteenth century.



insisted that white hair softened the expression of the eyes and made every lady divinely beautiful.

From the moment he became bald, Louis XIV never permitted himself to be seen without his wig by anyone save only Binette, his personal barber. Night and morning the King's wig had to be passed through the drawn curtains of his four-poster bed.

As the mode of Versailles set the fashion for all civilized Europe, powdered wigs became the mark of a gentleman in the Western world and were an essential part of the dress of all males of good family, even quite young boys. In every schoolboy's inventory of clothes he had to take with him to boarding school are found, from the middle of the seventeenth century on, items dealing with periwigs.

A boy assumed a wig, at least for Sunday wear, from the moment he ceased to dress like his sister at the age of six or seven. The prices varied from about sixteen shillings to many guineas, with recurrent expenditures of two shillings or so for half a pound of hair powder. A small linen cap was always worn between the wig and the head to absorb perspiration.

As Charles I had a fine head of hair of his own he did not adopt the periwig. His son, Charles II, however, while in exile at the Court of Versailles, did adopt the French fashion. Puritan England would hold no truck with such a vanity as false hair. So that it was not until the Restoration that the periwig was introduced into this country. By then many English people were so bored by years of piety and sobriety that they were eager to welcome any new fashionable folly.

Periwigs became the rage in England, and the demand for hair wherewith to make them became so great that children were forbidden to venture out alone for fear of hair-thieves. Wig-snatching became a common form of theft. Poor people who could not afford the expense of a wig invested in sixpenny lottery tickets, hoping to be lucky enough to win one. Or else they bought a wig second-hand or third-hand.

Samuel Pepys wrote in his diary in November 1663:

Comes Chapman the Perriwig maker and he cut off my hair which went a little to my heart at present to part with it; but it being over and my perriwig on I paid him £3 for it and away went he with my owne haire to make up another of.

On another occasion Pepys rebuked his periwig-maker for delivering him a wig of which the hair was full of nits.

During the Plague considerable panic was caused because of the fear of infection from wigs.

Pepys wrote:

Put on my coloured silk suit very fine and my new perriwig, bought a good while since, but durst not wear, because the plague was in Westminster when I bought it; and it is a wonder what will be the fashion after the plague is done, as to perriwigs, for nobody will dare to buy any haire, for fear of the infection, that it had been cut off the heads of people dead of the plague.

While their gallants were wearing large periwigs, ladies of the Restoration wore their hair puffed out over the ears with a fringe of small ringlets over the forehead. Every curl of their coiffure bore a poetic French name according to its

particular position. Side-curls were called *confidantes*, locks over the ears *crève-cœurs*, forehead curls *favourite*s, and so on. This seems to be an echo of the Paris *Précieuses*, with their insistence on flowery language. Certainly the modes of France were closely followed by the ladies, as well as the gentlemen, and when Mlle de Fontanges set a new style of hairdressing by wearing a lace and ribbon tower supported by wires on top of her head, English ladies followed her lead eagerly.

The word wig derives from the French word *perruque* in the time-honoured English fashion of steady mispronunciation of a foreign word until it finally gives birth to a new English one. Thus *perruque* went through the forms of 'perruke,' 'peruke,' 'perwyke,' 'perewig,' 'perwig,' and finally 'wig.'



VENETIAN COURTESAN

After Carpaccio. About 1500.

In the time of Queen Anne gentlemen sat with their bald heads uncovered while their hairdressers curled their great wigs by means of heated clay pipes called *bilboquets*. When the wig was placed on their heads they pressed their faces into glass cones while the wig was being powdered with scented white powder. A fine white earth clay, such as was used for making the finest Meissen china, was used for the best hair powder. It was extremely costly. Most gentlemen were content with flour.

Houses built at this time were always designed with special powdering closets—square, windowless rooms just big enough to accommodate one gentleman, his chair, and his barber. The wig was worn almost continually, only being left off at home occasionally, when a turban covered the head instead. Full-bottomed wigs required such quantities of hair, horse-hair for preference because it curled better, that in France the immense imports of hair from Germany for this purpose adversely affected the balance of gold, and Colbert, the Minister of Finance, tried to suppress wig-making by law. Without success.

At their peak of development, wigs were enormous, enveloping the body from shoulder to below the waist like a shawl. Sir John Vanbrugh has an illuminating scene in his play *The Relapse* between the fashionable Lord Foppington and his wig-maker, Mr Foretop, who says, presenting his Lordship with his new wig: "Sir, I have done what I defy any Prince in Europe to outdo. I have made you a periwig so long and so full of hair it will serve you for hat and cloak in all weathers." Lord Foppington, however, is not satisfied.

FORETOP: I have crammed 20 oz. of hair into it.

FOPPINGTON: There are not nine hairs on a side.

FORETOP: Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Oh Lord! Why, as God shall judge me, your Honour's side-face is reduced to the tip of your nose.

FOPPINGTON: My side-face may be in eclipse for ought I know, but I am sure my full-face is like the full moon! . . . A periwig to a man should be like a mask to a woman: nothing should be seen but his eyes.

At this time of elaborate hairdressing, both sexes carried hats under their arms which were never intended to be worn on their



heads. The *chapeau bas* was taken everywhere purely as a formality.

During the course of the eighteenth century many varieties of wig were perfected. Each man chose the wig suited to his years, his rank, and his profession. Among them were the "Comet," the "Cauliflower," the "Natty Scratch," the "Staircase," "Brush," "Ladder," "Negligent," "Bag," "Royal Bird," "Wild Boar's Back," "Rose," "Crutch," "Chancellor," "Cut Bob," "Long Bob," "Jansenist Bob," "Snail Back," "Spinach Seed," "Ramillie," and "Pigeon's Wing."

There were various kinds of perfumed powder sold for powdering the wigs. Exquisites preferred to use blue powder. Energetic young men sometimes liked to curl and powder their natural hair. Ladies of fashion powdered the coats of their pet dogs too.

Wigs were equally worn in the American colonies, being sent over from London after being carefully made to measure to the order of the gentlemen owners of the large American estates. These gentlemen always had everything they wore sent out from England, and kept a set of their measurements at the fashionable London tailors for this purpose. Their Negro house slaves, usually too poor to be able to afford second-hand wigs, contrived to make wigs of their own from cotton-wool and goat-hair.

Among the rules and regulations drawn up for the students of Harvard College (founded in 1636) was one forbidding "Long haire, locks, foretops, curlings, crispings, partings, or powdering of ye haire."

Fashionable beaux had a habit of combing their wigs in public, during a conversation in a ladies' drawing-room, for instance, at the theatre, or in the middle of a flirtation. They carried large fancy combs made in ivory and tortoise-shell in their pockets for this purpose.

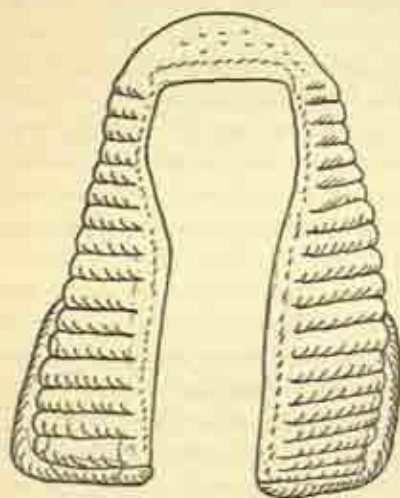
In 1680 British Army officers wore full-bottomed wigs together with breastplates. The wearing of wigs spread to the ranks, and throughout the whole of the eighteenth century the troops of the British Army were issued with a weekly ration of one pound of flour per soldier for the powdering of their wigs, the elaborate dressing of which formed an important part of

Army discipline. Officers' wigs, which were larger, required a minimum of two pounds of flour at each dressing.

Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, being hurriedly summoned to attend Queen Anne on a particular occasion, appeared before her in a Ramillie wig instead of the customary formal full wig. This roused the Queen's intense displeasure, and she

remarked tartly that next time he would doubtless come to Court in a night-cap.

The eighteenth century, which started with full-bottomed wigs such as English judges still wear, ended with neat short wigs such as English barristers wear to-day. As gentlemen in the last quarter of the century began to wear short wigs the headdresses of the ladies at the same time began to rise to greater and greater heights. This style reached its climax at the French Court, where, despite the sneers of her aunts at "horse decoration," Marie-Antoinette,



JUDGE'S WIG

Derived from an ordinary full-bottomed wig of the seventeenth century. Contemporary British.

egged on by her milliner Rose Bertin, flaunted the highest headdress of all. Her ten ostrich feathers *à la Minerve* towered above the waving forest of plumes of the ladies of her Court.

The huge coiffures worn by fashionable ladies in the last quarter of the eighteenth century were complicated works of art, requiring many hours to construct. The hair was first well pomaded with grease to help the powder to stick. Bushels of wool, bran, horsehair, and several cushions on a wire foundation were employed to build up the height to three feet or more, so that Addison's remark, after a previous change in fashion—"I remem-



ber several ladies that were once near seven feet high that at present want some inches of five"—could have applied equally to coiffures at the end as well as at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Ribbons, feathers, artificial flowers, models of people, farms, orchards, ships at sea, coaches and horses, military engagements, fruit and vegetables in wax or blown glass, were perched on the top. These headdresses caused considerable changes to take place in the architecture and transport of the time. Doors and ceilings of houses had to be heightened to permit their passage, for they were tall enough to brush the chandeliers, and the roofs of sedan chairs had to be hinged.

Once dressed, a lady's hair remained untouched for as long as possible, three weeks being usual. During this period she was obliged to sleep with her neck on a wooden rest to avoid upsetting her coiffure. The hair, stuffed with such edibles as grease, bran, and flour, became a pantry and breeding-ground for vermin of all kinds. Sometimes mice used to run out when the head was 'opened.' The elegant ivory hand 'scratcher,' mounted on a long stick and often adorned with gold and jewels, was no mere frivolity. It was a necessity. There were also other forms of scratching sticks much in demand, one variety with a pointed end, another with a broad end for killing lice.

Out of doors a calash was worn by middle-class ladies to cover their high-dressed hair, which, if not so extreme as that of more noble and wealthy ladies, yet was high enough to cause them considerable inconvenience. This calash was made of silk mounted over whalebone ribs, and it could be raised or lowered by means of a draw-string. Curiously enough, the calash has survived as an article of dress in certain parts of Ireland rather off the beaten track, particularly in the south and the west. Here one can still sometimes see old-fashioned dames pattering along in the rain, half obliterated beneath the huge calash which resembles the raised hood of an old-fashioned carriage.

Marie-Antoinette having lost most of her hair at the birth of her last child, French Court hairdressing was already beginning to be simpler when the French Revolution brought the monarchy down in ruins. Powdered hair and wigs became a dangerous indulgence, for any article of wear which suggested the aristocrat



was likely to lead its wearer to the guillotine. Loyal citizens of the Revolution danced round the Tree of Liberty with their hair deliberately untidy, or else cropped short to display their hatred for tyranny and for the airs and graces of the Court of Versailles. French hairdressers were ruined by the abrupt change of fashion and petitioned the National Assembly, which voted them twenty-two million francs compensation.

Wigs and hair powder continued to be the fashion in English aristocratic circles, except among young men of liberal views. What finally caused wigs and hair powder to be abandoned was the tax on hair powder introduced by Prime Minister Pitt in 1795 in order to raise money to fight the war against the French. The English have always felt the greatest repugnance to paying taxes, and many now preferred to wear their hair as nature had made it, to paying the annual tax of one guinea. The few who paid up were jeered at as "guinea-pigs."

The tax accomplished what years of bitter agitation against the wasting of precious flour in hair powder had failed to do. Rousseau had cried out against hair powder: "The poor are without bread because we must have powder for our hair." There had been ugly bread riots in England when failures in the harvest produced near famine conditions and the price of corn rose too high for the poor to buy flour. Yet none of this had the slightest effect upon the fashionable world, who continued to waste flour powdering their hair while the style was modish.

As wigs fell into disfavour natural hair began to be cultivated again, and barbers recovered from their initial depression when they found that they could do just as lively a trade selling unguents and lotions for the real hair instead of powder to embellish wigs. Lord Byron introduced a couplet in praise of Macassar oil into his poem *Don Juan*, and the lavish use of such hair stimulants was responsible for the general adoption of antimacassars on sitting-room chairs.

Rousseau's praise of nature resulted in a deliberate wildness of coiffure after the French Revolution. The ardent young patriots who thronged the Paris political clubs brushed their unfettered locks the wrong way on purpose. To be tousled was regarded as a sign of freedom.

Brummell in his heyday had said that the three most important people in Europe were himself, Napoleon, and Lord Byron. Everything Lord Byron did, said, or wore was news. The dandies copied Brummell. But the young liberals, the emerging Romantics, modelled themselves on Lord Byron. His loose, rather long, chestnut waves were assiduously copied all over Europe and America, and just as eagerly in Russia. It is curious how long his influence lasted. Byronic "free flowing locks" were cultivated thirty years or more after his death by a society which had renounced sharply everything he believed in. A New York book of etiquette (published in the eighteen-fifties) gives this advice about hairdressing for men: "When the hairdresser has done his prettiest, passing your fingers through it will be a decided improvement, giving your locks something of the freedom of Nature."

Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century nightcaps were commonly worn both by men and women. At the beginning of the century this seems to have been a habit continued from the practice of the preceding century (understandable enough, for some protection from draughts was clearly necessary at night then for those accustomed during the daytime to the close confinement of a heavy wig). The parson in *Joseph Andrews* wears his nightcap over his wig. Yet the nightcap continued, and may still be found to-day, in remote parts of the country, worn by very old gentlemen who refuse to abandon the customs of their youth.

Those French ladies who had cropped their hair in their first enthusiasm for freedom at the time of the French Revolution quickly regretted it and wore coloured wigs until their hair had grown again. By the eighteen-thirties female hairdressing in Europe was again so elaborate that almost every lady was obliged to resort to additional false hair to eke out her own. In the sixties, when a chignon that weighed less than five or six ounces was a subject for scorn, false hair was worn by the most respectable matrons.

There was a brief period in the eighties, perhaps a momentary reflection of the beginnings of the struggle for female emancipation, when it was fashionable for young ladies to wear cropped



hair and a fringe. This was succeeded by the bird's-nest coiffure apparently necessary to provide a base for the enormous hats which were so modish for the next thirty years. Even those with abundant natural locks were obliged to resort to hair-pads to puff out what they had. And the insertion of the long, spiked hatpins, used to skewer the immense hats on to the pagoda of hair, resembled a dangerous surgical operation.

The 1914 War brought vital changes in hairdressing. When it began women were still wearing heavy and elaborate coiffures. When it ended they were ready for the revolutionary new style, the bob. The word is the old seventeenth-century word. But it had never been applied to a female coiffure before. This mode of cutting the hair straight across the forehead and across the neck like a thatch may have owed something to the archaeological discoveries of the nineteen-twenties which thrilled the Western world. Everything with an Egyptian look was the highest fashion, and it was the era of the dark woman.

Those who did not care to wear a fringe dressed their hair well down over the eyes to give the impression of one. The bob seemed simple to cut, and was possible to do oneself at home with the aid of a pudding-basin and a sharp pair of scissors. But the style which succeeded the bob, the 'Eton crop,' required a skilled barber, and required him very often. All over Europe barbers were busier than they had been for years. A severe style which demanded good features and clean bone structure, it was not becoming to many of the women who wore it, though it looked well on young and slender girls, who doubtless would have looked equally attractive in any other style.

Women who had worn their hair in an Eton crop in their youth found it difficult to adapt themselves to the unbound hair of the War and post-war years. It looked to them untidy and slovenly, a confusion of the lines of face and neck, and a dismal sight in the street on a windy day. But few women are daring enough to defy the edict of fashion, however uncomfortable it may be to wear, and whatever injury it does to their sense of what is becoming and appropriate to their own particular appearance.

In India, where a static social system prevented the dress from changing for thousands of years, the extremely becoming sari and



## WAIST SUPPRESSION

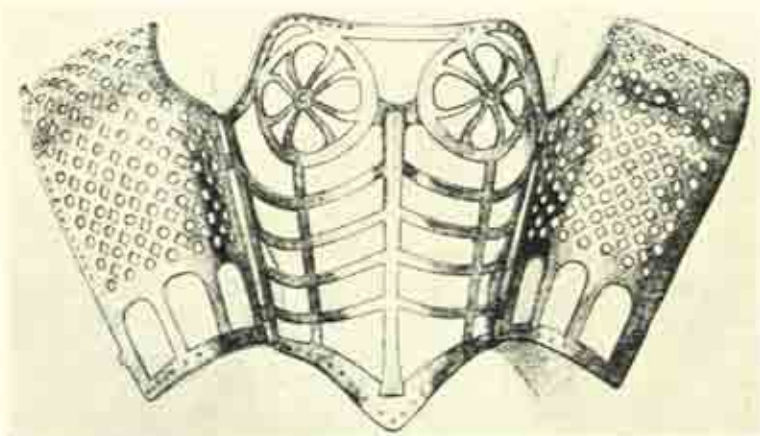


LADIES'  
DRESS-STANDS

*Left: 1927*

*Right: 1953*

*Below: STEEL CORSET,  
EARLY SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY (VENETIAN)*



## THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE

*Right:*  
"BLOOMERISM"  
—AN  
AMERICAN  
CUSTOM,  
1859



*Left:* WORKING-CLASS  
ENGLISH FAMILY IN  
SUNDAY DRESS, 1899

*Right:*  
EVENING  
DRESS, 1927



brief underblouse has proved to be so attractive and adaptable to women of all ages and classes that in the rapidly changing Indian society of to-day it firmly holds its place. Long hair has similarly been regarded in India as essential to female beauty, and one of the traditional requisites of a potential Indian bride has been the length of her hair. Bengali women wash and oil their hair daily to keep it in beauty.

In Asia a considerable proportion of men, and young children of both sexes, wear their heads shaved during the heat of the summer, as a measure of hygiene and for comfort. This fashion has come to be regarded as an attraction in which the shape of the naked head constitutes a beauty in itself, an idea echoed by a Victorian authority on fashion who insisted that "a manly bald head is something very becoming."



## CHAPTER SIX

### FOUNDATIONS AND UNDERWEAR

Many are the inconveniences that accrue to her Majesty's loving subjects from the said 'great petticoats' as hurting men's shins, sweeping down the ware of industrious females in the street, etc. I saw a young lady fall down the other day and believe me, sir, she very much resembled an overturned bell without a clapper.

"Tom Pain" in a letter to the "*Guardian*" in 1713

For Coronation year, red, white, and blue corsets are now on sale.

*National Corset Guild of Great Britain Conference (March 1953)*

**W**AIST-SUPPRESSION is as old as history. Havelock Ellis has written that the object of corsets is to make breathing thoracic instead of abdominal, thereby keeping the bosom in a constant, and presumably sexually attractive, state of movement. This, as far as it goes, is a sound explanation. But this leaves out of account the fact that men too have worn and even to-day sometimes still do wear corsets.

In ancient Crete both men and women squeezed in their middles by means of tight girdles. Greek women wore no corsets during the finest epochs of Greek history, but during the time of Greek decadence they fastened themselves into corsets which were designed, not to make the waist look smaller, a small waist never having appealed to the Greeks at any period as beautiful, but to make the hips look larger. Hippocrates denounced the women of Cos because they pinched in their waists with girdles.

Twice in the records of Western history have women's corsets been designed and worn not to thrust out the breasts into greater prominence, but to restrict and flatten them. Sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century corsets, contrived skilfully from wood, iron,

leather, and perforated steel, were flat and triangular in shape and designed to flatten the bosom. Montaigne thus described this style: "To become slender in waste and to have a strait Spanolised body, what pinching, what girding and cingling, will they not endure. Yea, sometimes with iron plates, with whalebone, and other such trash."

Again, in 1926 women wore a corset-brassière shaped like a wide bandage, the object of which was to flatten their natural shape so that the body from shoulders to knees appeared as a narrow oblong: "Ces femmes garçonnières," complained a French critic in 1930, "sans charme, sans grâce, et sans forme, délaissent leurs corsets et ceintures." He was not altogether correct. Most women, even at that period of rigid dieting, did not contrive to appear "sans forme" by means of wearing no corset. On the contrary, they were heavily corseted, the difference being that the corsets they wore were designed to straighten out their natural curves, not to emphasize them. They were corsets unlike any other corsets. But corsets nevertheless.

And as the former corset industry suffered severely because it could not adapt itself quickly to the new shapeless shape, doctors and gynecologists were enlisted to plead for the new mode to be abandoned. Without the slightest result. This mode did not last many years, but during its reign the doctors and gynecologists



THE WASP WAIST  
Cretan warrior of 1500 B.C.

might as well have tried to divert Niagara as change the course of the mode.

Messalina wore a linen corset of her own design which pinched in the waist and thrust the breasts outward. She set the fashions for many women in Rome, both those inside brothels and those outside.

The use of artificial means of changing the natural shape of the body was bitterly opposed by St Clement, who accused the women of his time of

- (1) wearing thick cork soles to give themselves height if they happened to be short,
- (2) using thin cork soles to make themselves look smaller if they were too tall,
- (3) using artificial stuffing to pad their hips and bellies,
- (4) using machines to lift sagging breasts,
- (5) laughing continually if they had good teeth and holding a myrtle branch between their teeth in order to show them off.

In the Western world corsets are of Spanish origin, and were introduced into France by Catherine de Médici, her own ideal being a thirteen-inch waist. Both men and women wore corsets, and wore precisely the same shape of corset, a long triangle point downward. Besides confining the body to the prescribed triangle, the object was to ensure the smoothest possible fit to the clothes worn over it, wrinkles being regarded with repugnance.

In addition to the corset, women also wore a vast *vertugade*, *vertugadin*, or in English *farthingale*. This was a circular whale-bone frame, in shape not unlike a horse's halter, which was fastened round the hips to provide a basis for extending the petticoat and kirtle, which were put on over it. In England it was popularly known as a 'bum-roll,' and this in fact appears to have been the original intention of the accessory, which Rabelais claims was invented in a Spanish brothel. A Continental caricature of 1590 depicts the devil inviting a lady to fasten herself into a *vertugadin* with these words:

Venez, belles filles avec fesses maigres,  
Bientot les feray-je rondes et alaignes.

Once tied round the waist it was impossible for the wearer to



lower her arms, which she was obliged to prop on her *vertugadin* as upon a shelf. There were niceties in its adjustment, and the English farthingale was worn sharply tilted up at the back, so as to give a curiously unbalanced look, as though the lady were falling forward.

When the farthingale was worn in conjunction with the breast-flattening Tudor corset a mutually contradictory effect was produced. The corset, as with the exposed open bosom affected by Elizabeth I, suggested flat-chested immaturity, while the farthingale exaggerated the hips and posterior. As the Queen herself was naturally very low-waisted, English farthingales were worn pulled well down over the hips, so that a whole generation of fashionable ladies gave the appearance of having extremely long, straight bodies mounted on extremely short legs. Another version of the farthingale gave the body a pyramid shape.

Fashionable folk of both sexes had their clothes heavily bombasted to swell themselves out in the desired places. The men used more bombast than the women. A culprit of humble birth, brought before an Elizabethan judge on a charge of infringing the sumptuary laws by being over-bombasted for his lowly rank, drew out from his trunks and doublet two sheets, two tablecloths, ten napkins, four shirts, a brush, a glass, a comb, and several nightcaps, pleading in his defence: "Your worships may understand that because I have no safer storehouse this doth serve me as a roome to lay up my goodes in, and though it be a strait prison yet it is big enough for them."

Underwear had been of the simplest up to this period, a linen shift being all that was esteemed necessary, and at night people slept naked, the poorer people sleeping in their clothes for warmth. In the tenth century woollen underwear was only worn as a penance.

The exposure of the shirt which slashing encouraged concentrated the attention upon what was worn underneath the top garments, and both men and women began to vie with each other in wearing undershifts of the finest linen, beautifully embroidered wherever they showed. In the Renaissance the woman's petticoat was as heavily embroidered as her kirtle, gold and jewels being lavished upon it by those who could afford to do so.

Henry VIII in his first infatuation with Anne Boleyn made her a present of a "blacke nyghte gowne of blacke sattyn borderede wythe blacke velvette and well lynede with furre." It cost him the sum of £101 15s. 8d., which must be multiplied at least by forty to give some idea of its cost in present-day monetary values. This was not what we now know as a nightgown, but something more in the nature of a dressing-gown.

A letter sent to Henry VIII from Lady Bryan (who had the care of Princess Elizabeth after Henry had had Anne Boleyn executed), pleading with him to make some financial allowance for the infant he was rejecting, lists an interesting set of what underwear was considered essential for a child of three in 1536: "She has neither gowne nor petticoate nor no manner of linnen nor kerchiefs nor rails nor sleeves nor many other things needed for a childe of nearly three yeares olde." Rails were nightgowns. Sleeves, which were fastened on separately by means of points, were regarded as separate garments and often used interchangeably with other sleeves to different bodices.

The farthingale had a long reign and was revived in the early eighteenth century and again in the nineteenth century under the name of crinoline. The Elizabethan farthingale may not have been as uncomfortable to wear as it looked, for the limbs were free inside the tent of whalebone and material, not even drawers interfering with the movements and walking. There was, in fact, plenty of room, which was put to good use on one occasion by Louise de Montégnard, who saved her cousin Montmorency "from enemies who sought his life by hiding him underneath her vertugade" until the danger had passed. As a quick method of concealment the farthingale was greatly superior to the closet—a fact which Puritan moralists lost no opportunity to point out, declaring that this explained their popularity with debauched ladies of fashion.

Stubbes was equally angered at the extravagance of spending money on fine shirts, "the meanest of which would cost a crown or a noble, whilst the most curiously stitched were valued at ten pounds apiece, which is horrible to hear."

With the Stuarts the flattening Tudor corset began to change its shape, and the busks of the new-styled corsets were used not to iron



out the breasts, but to push them up. They were made of metal, carved wood, and, for those ladies who could afford the price, carved and painted ivory. Gallants regarded the present of such busks as a delicate compliment to the lady they wished to flatter, especially when they had composed the tender verses engraved thereon themselves. Such busks included the name of the author and date beside the verse, like any other publication.

Ce bois touche par privilège  
Un double petit mont de neige  
Qui par un joli mouvement  
Se soulève fort mollement,  
Et puis mollement se rabaisse  
Allant et revenant sans cesse.

Thomas Nashe was shocked at the new corsets and declared: "Theire breastes they embuske upp on hie and their rounde roseate buds immodestly laye forth and shewe that at theire handes there is fruite to bee hoped."

When Catherine of Braganza arrived in England in 1662 to wed Charles II she wore an enormous farthingale, which had by then quite gone out of fashion in this country. This farthingale, to the King's chagrin, she insisted upon retaining, though he lost no time in sending her a French dressmaker with a trousseau in the newer looser mode. Catherine's farthingales were the cause of endless friction between the royal pair, for they proved excessively awkward to travel in, and she refused to travel without them—much to the annoyance of the comfort-loving Monarch, who grumbled at such impediments "without which there is no moving." Finally he declared she looked like a bat.

Her ladies-in-waiting were apparently all ugly, and Pepys, who drove to Charing Cross to see the Queen and her ladies as they arrived from Portsmouth, described them as "not handsome" and their farthingales as "ridiculous."



STAY BUSK OF  
CARVED WOOD,  
GIVEN AS LOVE-  
TOKEN

English, eight-  
centh century.



By Congreve's day the corset had again changed its shape, and was worn plain in front and laced up at the back, in order to thrust up the bosom still higher and to flatten the diaphragm; so that in *The Way of the World* Millamant's lover begs her when they wed, "not to squeeze for a shape when you shall be breeding," lest she mould their child's head "like a sugarloaf."

Early in the eighteenth century a new kind of farthingale was invented, with hoops extending sideways from the hips, leaving front and back quite flat. 'Panniers' they were called, after the hen-coops they resembled. In their extreme form they measured six or seven feet across. They were made out of metal rods linked together by webbing and raised and lowered by means of a pulley on a draw-string.

It was a country mode as well as proper wear for the city. If to our modern eyes it seems astonishing to observe, in the pastoral conversation pieces of the period, a lady in such hoops, surrounded by her young daughters in similar hoops, in the peaceful formal garden of her country seat, let us remember that it is the duty of the student of social behaviour never to be surprised or shocked at anything—never to damn or praise a fashion. For his own verdict is sure to be set aside by further changes in taste even during his own lifetime. What looks beautiful now will, as James Laver has pointed out, look hideous presently, for beauty and ugliness are meaningless concepts except in their time and place.

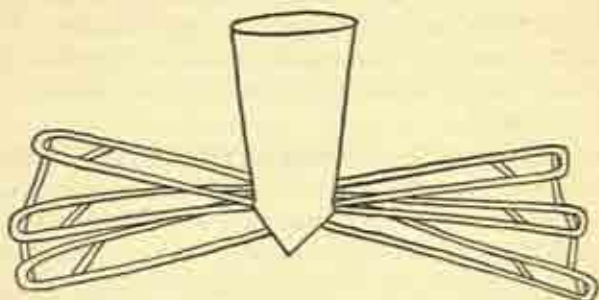
Hoops must have appeared fairly permanent, though they did not in fact last in that shape many years, for staircases were altered to suit the fashion and bannisters redesigned to curve outward at the bottom to allow ladies in hoops to get past.

Wags wrote to the newspapers ridiculing the fashion, and occasionally a victim of the mode took the trouble to reply. "A lady of rank," for instance, wrote to the *Guardian* in 1713: "I shall not think the three hours business I usually devote to my toilet below the dignity of a rational soul. I am content to suffer great torment from my stays that my shape may be graceful in the eyes of others."

At the first public performance of Handel's *Messiah*, which took place in Dublin in April 1742 and was a charity benefit, the ladies were requested to dress without hoops and their escorts to leave

their swords at home, thus enabling the theatre to seat seven hundred instead of six hundred.

Strict churchmen preached against hoops on the grounds that they encouraged immorality, not merely by affording the space to conceal a surprised lover, but because they were also most effective in concealing the fruits of a guilty passion. Such sermons, of course had absolutely no effect, unless possibly to suggest an idea to receptive minds.



CORSET AND HOOPS

English, middle of eighteenth century.

In 1750 *ventres-postiches* were imported from Paris, where it was smart to appear with a large belly. Called 'paddies,' they were soon manufactured here in England and sold briskly, as did false breasts made out of tin and wax.

Underwear was little regarded except where it showed. Exquisite lace ruffles were worn over coarse and dirty shifts, and richly embroidered petticoats often enough over no shift at all. It was an age of great elegance and considerable filth.

Dr Johnson roused no surprise in confessing that he was not "partial to clean linen" and frankly "hated immersion." Perfume could not overcome the stench of dirt, and epidemics of smallpox, typhus, and enteritis regularly swept through the towns. The wealthy, though less crowded than the poor, were equally dirty, so that they were subject to the same kind of diseases.

Superstition corroded even the well-educated. A woman quack named Joanna Stevens had no difficulty in inducing

Parliament to pay her £5000 for the secret of her patent cure for gall-stone. It was a powder made from egg-shells, soap, and snails. Horace Walpole himself took a course of this treatment.

The French Revolution caused corsets to be temporarily discarded in France, and a proclamation posted up all over Paris announced to the gratified citizens: "Vous avez la liberté des cultes et celle du costume." Citizen Armand Duval, who occupied the post of Chef de Bureau of the Section of Arts and Science at the Ministry of the Interior, advocated as suitable attire for Revolutionary ladies: "No shoes, stockings, corsets, or garters. No petticoats, but a simple tunic open at both sides."

What was exactly a suitable dress for the inheritors of France was debated endlessly in the Paris clubs, and David, the painter, upon being commissioned to design such a dress (for Revolutionary Paris was just as keenly interested in clothes as Paris had been before and has been since), produced patriotic models in red, white, and blue, based, as we have said, on the silhouette of Grecian friezes.

To be a good French citizen it was essential to look exactly like an ancient Greek. Maurice Quay reported that Delécluze went so far as to stroll about the streets of Paris dressed like Agamemnon. On the whole, however, few French politicians felt they had suitable figures for Greek dress.

No corsets and no chemises were permitted to spoil the pure line of the female body. Liberty and Nature were the ideals of French ladies, who sat about in chilly rooms decorated only with a Greek urn and a collection of classical coins, learning (especially if they had fine arms) to play the harp, and dressed in a simple sheath of white muslin which exposed not merely shoulders but breast as well.

Some ladies preferred to wear white or flesh-coloured tights underneath this simple costume, but not a few left their limbs unadorned except for anklets or toe-rings.

But the high classical waist was not so easily achieved by ladies who led an idle life and took no exercise whatever, and it was not long before corsets returned to fashion. These Empire corsets were short and high, reaching from immediately below the breasts, and designed expressly to push them upward. Interest



focused on this region for thirty years or more. The poems of Byron, so adored by his generation, make continual reference to the female bosom.

False breasts (*appas postiches*) were sold in Paris under the poetic name of *suppléants*. In 1803 Moreau de la Sarthe patented a new kind of corset, called *divorces*, which reached no farther than the navel, and which was designed to separate the breasts, an idea which is now once again in fashion after a hundred and fifty years, under the American title of 'cleavage.'

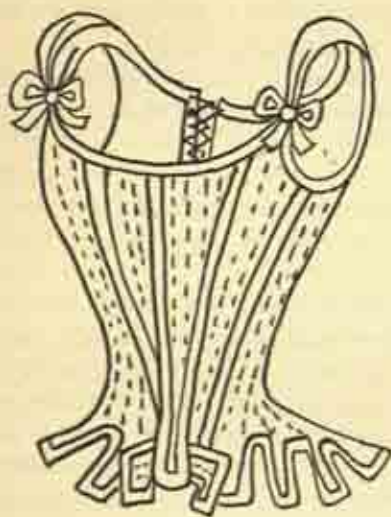
Napoleon hated corsets, and, though both his wives insisted on wearing them, he publicly denounced any form of corset as "l'assassin de la race humaine." He believed they interfered with pregnancy, and it was his constant preoccupation to encourage the production both of large quantities of male French infants in order to supply his armies, and a male heir of his own to found a personal dynasty.

By 1830 corsets were worn as tightly as ever before in history, for by this time a small waist was essential as well as a large bosom. A correspondent signing herself "Mignonette" wrote to a ladies' magazine in that year to say that she had been fastened into a tight corset at the age of thirteen to improve her figure and had been made to sleep in one. Another correspondent declared that she had been sent to school at the same age, a fashionable and expensive boarding school in the West End of London, where the governess fastened her into rigid corsets which laced at the back and so could not be loosened without detection. Both ladies vowed that this method of disciplining the waist had been of the utmost benefit, and that to it they owed their elegant figures.

A lady wrote to *The Queen* in 1863, boasting that her waist measured 16½ inches, and the editor, complimenting her upon such an achievement, remarked: "Is a small waist admired by gentlemen? I have invariably noticed that the girls with the smallest waists are the queens of the ballroom."

Frequent fainting accompanied the increasing tightness to which corsets were laced. That, too, was considered part of the feminine charm of a woman. Rude health, even moderate health, was regarded with aversion as vulgar. It was fashionable for a well-bred lady (even though her papa was in trade—and the new

recruits to fashion, whose money came from factories and warehouses and not from land, were all in such a category) to be excessively delicate. A whole generation of women lay about on sofas reading sentimental verse, anxious to prove by their extreme sensibility that they really had nothing to do with the vulgar word 'trade' from which they were deriving their wealth.



CORSET OF QUILTED CANVAS ON  
WHALEBONE FRAME

English, late eighteenth century.

Tight corsets caused fainting fits and also cramped the stomach, so that fashionable ladies had no desire to eat. For eating was becoming more and more vulgar. It was much better to go into a decline, which a considerable number of them did, than to confess to an appetite for earthly food. Byron, a sure guide to the sentiments of his time and the years that followed, could not bear to see a woman eating—another source of annoyance with Lady Byron, who besides being a mathematician was also gluttonous.

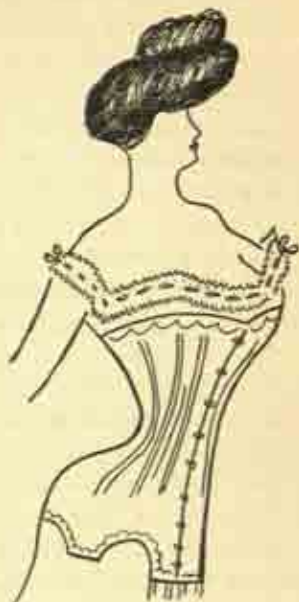
There were in Queen Victoria's day other reasons for ladies to be fragile in health. Not only the overtight corset and aversion to food, but the excessive weight carried by wearing six or seven petticoats (two of heavy flannel), did not encourage a lady to rise from her sofa. The crinolines of the sixties gave some relief from this burden of weight, but themselves grew to such dimensions that a gentleman was unable to give a lady his arm to take her down to dinner, or escort her across the road. She simply could not reach his arm across the intervening expanse of skirt. It was hardly possible for three ladies to occupy a moderate-sized room at the same time during the sixties.



In 1885 Frantz Gérard, a Lyons doctor, declared that the current corsets were causing *entéroptose*, dropping of the female abdominal organs. Seven years after this, Worth, the famous dress-making house, produced a new straight-fronted corset designed to correct this; but by 1904 this new corset had reached so far in the opposite direction that it was pushing the bowels out of place upward instead of downward. Doctors met in learned conclave to design sane and healthy corsets for their patients, who were suffering from every manner of disease of heart, lungs, and digestive organs. But whatever they managed to design, the fashionable corset-maker subtly exaggerated, so that not only would the waist be pinched in and the hips thrown backward or forward, but not infrequently the spine put out of balance as well.

What precisely was the right kind of corset, was a problem never solved either then or now. Anna Pavlova, for instance, used to dance her 'dying swan' dance wearing a tightly laced pink satin corset under her classical ballet-dress though she could scarcely have been slighter or measured less round the waist.

Until the late seventies of the nineteenth century women, and men too, had kept up their stockings by means of garters knotted above or below the knee. A pair of silk garters in their own pretty case made a charming present for a *soupirant* to offer to his lady, especially when printed with such tender verses as the following:



PRACTICAL CORSET  
"SPECIALLY SUITABLE  
FOR WEARING WITH  
TAILOR-MADE COSTUMES.  
SIZES STOCKED 19- TO  
26-INCH WAIST"

Marshall and Snelgrove's  
Catalogue, 1905.



Ton âme est si belle et si pure  
Que tes vertues m'ont su me charmer,  
C'est pour moi toute la nature  
Depuis j'ai appris à t'aimer.

But there were other garters for sale adorned with ribbons and mottoes hardly suitable for a respectable woman, for whom they obviously were not intended. The Paris shops sold embroidered garters, perhaps for English tourists to take home to show their male friends, adorned with such suggestive fancies as a Cupid hovering above the phrase, "Ah! Ah! Qu'est-ce que je vois là-haut?"

Underwear, while it did not show, was generally disregarded, but the new bell-shaped skirts of the nineties permitted a glimpse of petticoat. This opportunity the lingerie-makers seized upon, and presently the greatest dressmakers were devoting more attention to the petticoat than to the plain skirt worn over it. The finest silks, laces, and ribbons were massed on to the richest materials, especially on the lower half of the petticoat, and most of all upon the bottom flounce. And it had to be of silk (or at least brown-paper lined to rustle in movement).

The respectable and worthy editor of a French family dictionary published in 1899 could not restrain himself when he came to explain the word "*Dessous*," but wrote, in an ecstasy of poetic exaltation: "*Dessous*: ces jolies jupons irisées, dentelées, qui font que quand jupe se relève sur ces choses fraîches et légères on a l'impression d'un calice de fleurs qui entrouvre ses pétales et déplie ses feuilles." And by 1900 clergymen were denouncing from the pulpit nightdresses made with accordion pleats and trimmed with baby-ribbon as unchristian.

The first bustles, in the seventies, were made of buckram, pleated or frilled, and put on by tying like an apron in reverse. This was followed by the demi-crinoline, straight-fronted with rows of hoops at the back only. The second bustle, called the 'health bustle,' was made of braided wire and advertised as recommended by leading physicians to be less heating to the spine. Lily Langtry gave her name to a popular contrivance of spring hoops, leather, and lattice-work, which cost only half a crown, and which, it was claimed, would "hold up whether

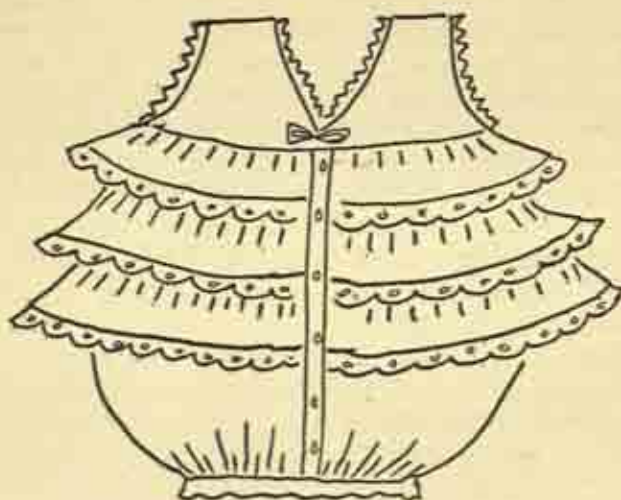
the wearer is sitting or lying down, the bustle resuming its proper position upon rising." Adjusted by means of a cord, it was guaranteed to be of the correct Paris shape.

All through the nineteenth century, as we have said, and well into the twentieth men frequently wore corsets. The *Tailor and Cutter* advertised them and recommended their use for gentlemen of all ages, remarking that a good figure was essential to the man who desired to be well dressed, and pointing out that corsets had a large sale among the clergy. Nor had bombasting gone out with the Tudors. The *Tailor and Cutter* of 1895 mentioned the fact that "the exquisites of to-day secretly stuff their shoulder-points with rashers of hair-cloth, wadding and cloth clippings until the clothed city clerk appears to rival in muscular development the half-nude gladiators who lift horses and elephants in our Public Arenas." A practice revived during and after the 1939 War in 'spiv' padded shoulders for men.

Students of costume and social history should find it worth while to keep an eye on domestic architecture, which invariably repeats a fashionable motif once it is firmly established. Houses built in the eighteen-seventies and eighteen-eighties have a bustle of their own in the form of a rear greenhouse (often facing due north and therefore defeating their own object). Blouses of the 1900 and 1910 period are echoed in the overhanging balconies of the big houses then built.

Furniture, of course, follows the dominant motif very closely, adapting itself to fit around a fashion. Such, for instance, is the small Victorian armchair without arms for the wife, which accompanies the bigger armchair with arms intended for the husband. The smaller chair was designed to allow for the crinoline. Chairs were made in the seventies and eighties with a space at the back above the seat to allow for the passage of the bustle. The hoops of the early eighteenth century were accommodated on chairs shaped like hip-baths with no sides at all, lest they should interfere with the hoops. Georgian gentlemen were able to read in comfort, without danger of damage to their wired coat-tails, by means of a special chair designed by Chippendale in which they sat backward, straddling the back of the chair, upon which was fixed a book-rest.

The excessively pouched blouses of the first decade of the twentieth century needed more filling than Nature could always provide. The *amplificateur* supplied this deficiency. It was a camisole with several heavy frills sewn round the bust. We have



THE FALSE BOSOM: "AMPLIFICATEUR"

English, 1908.

the same thing in 1953 in brassières of frilled tulle designed for thin women. Another form of bust-bodice was made with inner pockets which could be padded to the size required or fitted with wax improvers of various dimensions. It was a period when the fashions demanded big and heavy women. Those who were neither did their best to make themselves appear so. The music-halls produced many satires on such themes. One such was a parody of *After the Ball* and began:

After the ball was over  
 See her take out her glass eye,  
 Hang her cork leg in the corner,  
 Shake up a bottle of dye, etc.



During the First World War a wave of Orientalism swept over Europe. It was partly because of the success in Paris of the Ballet Russe; partly owing to the entry of Russia into the War; mostly, perhaps, to distract soldiers on leave from the horrors of the trenches.

It expressed itself in brilliant colours in dress, much gold and tassels, and a riot of exotic underwear which *Vogue* reported carefully in 1916: "Black tulle trimmed with beads and black velvet. A witty tulle camisole trimmed with silver stars. Lingerie trimmed with fur which, being scarce and dear, is of course immensely popular."

The invention of rayon brought fancy underwear and imitation silk stockings within the reach of a much wider circle of women. Prior to this a good 'silk dress' marked out sharply one class from another, for only the rich could afford silk. The rich, though far more families were impoverished by the War than made money out of it, still wore pure silk and real jewels, but the increasingly attractive rayons narrowed the social gap more and more. Nylon, outcome of the Second World War, has accompanied the emergence of a new class of bourgeois poor, while the confusion of export priorities and purchase tax for several years caused the price of cotton to be dearer than silk.

Christian Dior's 'New Look' (really the oldest of all looks) succeeded in bringing back breasts and hips into fashion after twenty years of pre-1939 shapelessness. Boned corsets are to-day commonly worn, but they are light and supple compared with those worn in the nineteenth century, and hardly corsets at all compared to still earlier models.

The waist is emphasized once more by wide belts, wide sleeves, etc., but is still less important in the general picture than is the bosom. To-day the bosom is the focal point of every gown, and the brassière beneath it the key to the ensemble.

Brassières to-day are frequently moulded into sharp points, fitted with 'falsies,' whaleboned into unnatural protuberances. The ideal aimed at is two acutely spiked cones never before seen in Europe and related only to the female form in African sculpture. At least two film stars have risen to the height of their profession in recent years by the mere virtue of possessing abnormally large

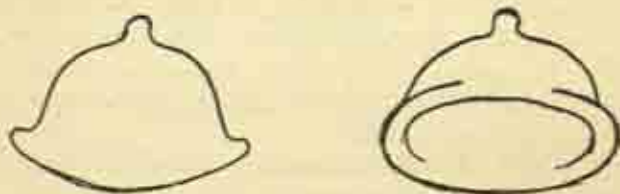
breasts, and one American lady was selected to star in a popular American television programme entirely on account of her oversized bosom.

Under the heading "It's the Age of 'Cuties,'" the *Daily Herald* in March 1953 reports:

Three out of every four women are using 'cuties,' or bust-improvers. And within a year one out of every two British women will be doing the same. Leading corsetières said this in Manchester yesterday at a conference of the National Corset Guild of Great Britain. "It's largely the influence of the films," said Mrs Meita Fisher, the chairman.

Psychologists suggest a simple explanation for this. In the hungry post-1939 world, as in the hungry post-Napoleonic world, as in Russia, where famine used once to be endemic, the female breast is the obvious symbol of nourishment.

Women in every country in the world are prepared to undergo torments of discomfort by squeezing themselves into whatever shape is in each particular place regarded as attractive. True to this universal law, Negro women of the Igbirra (in the Kabba province of Nigerian West Africa) artificially elongate their breasts in order to acquire dignity and prestige, because pendulous breasts imply that the woman has had many children.



FALSE BREASTS

Made of pink rubber. Price 7s. 11d. per pair. Contemporary.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### JEWELLERY AND CLOTHES

In theyre haire thus wreathed and crestede are hanged bugles, ouches, rings, gold, silver, jewelled bodkins, glasses, and other such childish gew-gaws.

*Philip Stubbes (1583)*

ORNAMENT precedes dress. Our remote ancestors bedecked themselves (as primitive peoples in many parts of the world still do to-day) with bright berries, sea-shells, and feathers, before learning how to make more permanent ornaments out of claws, bits of bone, and stones pierced for stringing together. Early Neolithic necklaces have been found made out of stags' teeth pierced thus. Stone Age beads have been found which are painted all over with magic signs.

As man learned to handle stone and metal he fashioned lasting ornaments for his body, and it is from the discovery of these that we are finding out bit by bit something about ancient history.

Tombs and river-beds have yielded wonderful treasures. Not long ago a Thames waterman picked a superb Roman necklace out of the Thames mud. The famous Tara Celtic brooch was discovered accidentally by children playing in a field in Ireland. It was thought so little of that this priceless jewel was declined for one shilling and sixpence when offered to a dealer.

Beads have frequently been used as barter or directly as currency. The American Indians, for instance, used close-packed shell necklaces called "wampum" for this purpose. An essential part of the costume of many European, Balkan, and Arab tribes consists of silver coins used as buttons or made into necklaces. In our present post-war period the collection of the attractive silver threepenny pieces to make into necklaces or to use as buttons almost drove them out of circulation altogether.

In times of war or social unrest, such as our present period, many



people think it prudent to convert land or unwieldy property into jewels, which take up little space when travelling and keep their value; whereas land may be overrun by the enemy, ordinary currency may lose its value, and property may be destroyed. In the Middle Ages much wealth was kept in the form of plate and jewels for this reason. The rise of Nazi Germany and the

Fascist régime in Italy brought a flood of refugees from those countries, their wealth often carried on one finger in the form of a valuable ring.

All through recorded history kings and chieftains have carried their treasure into battle with them, lest, should it be necessary for them to escape, they leave their wealth behind for the enemy to seize. That is how King John came to lose his jewels with his baggage-train in the sands of the Welland. Much of this treasure must still be there, for most of it was never recovered, sinking deeper and deeper into the treacherous sands. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo a



WIG HELMET

Fifteen-carat gold helmet in shape of wig, with drilled holes for attaching a padded lining. From the grave of Mes Kalam Shar, Ur.

quantity of valuable jewels, besides gold coins in various different currencies, was found hidden in a secret drawer of his war carriage.

But there is also another reason why kings took their treasure into battle. It was believed that precious stones possessed the magic power to bring their wearer good luck and grant his desires. Significantly the Egyptian word for *bead* and *luck* is the same.

The Roman superstition that coral was efficacious in keeping the evil eye from harming babies has survived to our own time, and to-day, two thousand years afterwards, it is still a favourite material for the making of rattles and teething-rings and baby jewellery.

The richest Egyptians in the dynasties of Egypt's splendour wore wigs wrought entirely from jewels and precious stones—gold and silver, lapis lazuli, turquoise, and beautiful enamels. Both men and women wore finger-rings, bracelets (two above and two below the elbows), necklaces, and jewelled collars, tiaras, and in addition a 'pectoral,' or portable shrine containing a magic amulet, was worn on the breast to protect the heart. These pectorals were often made of bronze, covered with thin gold-leaf—for the rich of pure gold inlaid with lapis lazuli and cornelian. For further protection written charms were concealed about the body, and the vulnerable spot between the shoulder-blades was safeguarded by wearing a Menyt (or jewelled club slung backward round the neck), which was believed to afford magic protection. The Pharaoh wore still more powerful talismans, the golden serpent in front of his headdress keeping perpetual vigilance and ready to attack his enemies by poison.

Agates in the form of an eye were particularly lucky, and scarabs (magic life-giving beetles) were worn in quantities both in life to protect from death and in death to ensure eternal life.

Talismans and amulets, made potent by the witch-doctor or priest, were worn by all who could afford to pay for them in all early civilizations—especially by children, whose parents were always eager to protect them from the numerous dangers that threatened their more vulnerable lives. The most popular protective jewellery was in the form of a pendant, probably because, as with the crucifix, it lies over the heart.

Modern civilization rarely succeeds in destroying these older superstitions.

Greek taxi-drivers often hang a blue bead beside their steering-wheel to prevent the evil eye from causing them to have an accident. How many civilized men and women to-day still carry a lucky coin in their pockets? People engaged in dangerous

occupations such as soldiers and sailors, miners and pilots, are often attached to such talismans. In 1916 during the First World War *Vogue* reported that the jewellers were selling vast quantities of lucky charms in the form of gold and diamond elephants with their trunks upheld (to hold up the luck, in the same way that a lucky horseshoe must be pointed upward to prevent the good luck from falling out).

Around the birth of a baby many superstitions have grown. Tudor midwives continued the medieval practice of making the mother wear an eagle-stone round her neck in a silken bag. Before delivery the sympathetic magic of loosening all knots was performed, and at the same time beneficent charms were spoken to encourage the child to appear. If the birth were difficult the father was sent to the church to ask the priest to have the church bells rung (the primitive method of scaring off evil spirits by a loud noise), or if the family were too poor to hope for such a favour as having the church bells rung, the midwife would come provided with a bit of old bell-rope to tie round the mother's waist during labour.

Midwives in Tudor England were obliged to take an oath not to substitute any other child for the new-born baby (fear of changelings being deeply rooted in the British, so that it has remained a favourite theme of novelettes and ballads almost to our own day—the rightful heir being defrauded of his estate by the wiles of an unscrupulous midwife). The midwife also had to promise not to use "any kind of sorcery or incantation in the time of travail of any woman."

Corals were still hung from the neck of a newly born child to enable him to cut his teeth without trouble and to protect him from witches. It was believed that coral lost its colour and grew pale when the child was unwell. The treatment of smallpox and other serious infectious diseases, such as scarlet fever, was to hang the child's bed with scarlet and wrap him in a scarlet bed-gown. If nevertheless the child was going to die his pillow was removed to ease his release from life, for it was commonly believed that no one could die properly who lay upon feathers. It may be observed that scarlet as a colour for hospital dressing-gowns and blankets still stubbornly persists even to-day.



The Phœnicians, who were so fond of jewellery that they wore three or four necklaces at the same time, and glass finger-rings as well, introduced Egyptian jewellery to the Greeks by means of trade. The Greeks developed it after their own taste, and so reached a most exquisite art. In particular they perfected filigree or twisted gold wire work. Taking for their themes natural motifs such as flowers, animals, and human faces, Greek jewellers made enduringly lovely buttons, rings, brooches, pins for the hair, necklaces, ear-rings, diadems, and crowns. Rich Greeks wore jewelled borders to their gowns. Etruscan goldsmiths at first copied Greek and Phœnician styles of jewellery, but before long developed their own rings, wreaths, and headdresses in gold, silver, and electrum.

It was Greek goldsmiths captured by the Romans who first made jewellery for Imperial Rome. With the growth of wealth and luxury, Roman jewels reached an extreme of decadence. Romans wore jewellery in large quantities whether they could afford to have real gems or whether they were obliged to wear imitation. According to Pliny, Roman glass-factories were kept busy turning out imitation rubies, and the heavy gold bracelets worn by men were more often than not hollow.

Cato introduced legislation against the ostentatious wearing of jewellery, and Seneca raised his voice against the effeminacy of Roman senators who wore six rings on each finger and bought different weights of rings for summer and winter wear.

Key-rings and poison-rings are both Roman inventions. Poison-rings were made with the bezel of soft yellow gold containing enough poison in liquid form for suicide, so that the wearer, when trapped in a desperate situation, could bite through the gold and swallow the poison. It was in this manner that Hannibal killed himself.

Jewish wedding-rings were enormously large and used only for the wedding ceremony. The bezel was made in the form of a gabled building representing the Temple of Solomon.

Romans wore amber rings to cure goitre (amber with an imprisoned fly was looked upon as particularly efficacious and was more expensive to buy, according to Pliny, than a healthy, live slave), and coral as a remedy for skin diseases. Glass cameos were

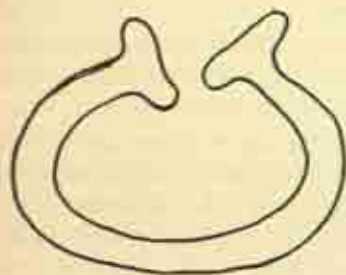
so esteemed that often they were strung together and mounted as a necklace.

Roman ladies delighted in elaborate gold hair-pins eight inches in length, with intricate Corinthian designs. They also introduced the imperial gold coins into all their jewellery, including their rings. As the Roman Empire declined the former excellent intaglios gave place to shoddy jewellery featuring occult symbols. Some authorities regard this as typical of all dying cultures.

East and West met in the jewellery of Byzantium, where the garments of the wealthy were heavily embroidered with gold and fine pearls. The Empress Theodora had begun her career as a

courtesan. In the days of her imperial glory she established a home for prostitutes on the Bosphorus. It was not a success. Many of the girls, overcome by the boredom of virtue, threw themselves into the convenient sea. Theodora wore gowns weighed down with gorgeous gems and an elaborate diadem of pearls and emeralds.

Embroideries elaborately worked in gold thread and clustering seed pearls are typical



GOLD BRACELET  
British, Bronze Age.

of Byzantine jewellery. Such ornament was carried together with early Christianity into Russia, as was also the Greek alphabet. There these still survive to-day. In the Church, with its elaborate ritual, the characteristic seed-pearl work and diadem headdress are now incorporated in ikons, wedding tiaras, and in peasant costumes.

In the British Isles rings, pins, and torques (disc-shaped ornaments for the neck) made in bronze or gold were worn even before the Roman conquest. Glass beads were imported from Phœnician traders and probably used for barter. Early dress-fastenings have been found made of pure gold, especially in Ireland. Celtic brooches, in the form of a pin on an incomplete circle, were wrought in bronze on the principle of the safety-pin,



and necklaces were made of bronze or twisted wire. Jet was popular for jewellery. So was amber, quartz, glass, and even coal.

After the Roman conquest wealthy Britons began to copy Roman jewellery, and it was recorded that before the close of the first century British dress and British jewels were cast aside by the British themselves as a badge of barbarism. "The sons of British chiefs began to affect our dress," recorded Tacitus with satisfaction.

Though the Phœnicians are chiefly famous as traders, they were responsible for the invention of an attractive new form of ear-ring which clasped the rim of the ear, instead of being attached to the lobe, and was set with jingling jewels which tinkled with every movement of the head.

During the Dark Ages the craft of jewellery, as with other peaceful arts, was only kept alive by monks, many of whom were skilled goldsmiths, working quietly in isolated monasteries. Thus, what remained of the art of jewellery was confined largely to Church jewels. The pre-Christian practice of interring precious ornaments with the dead was forbidden by Charlemagne in the eighth century, both on the grounds of impiety and extravagance. His orders were obeyed more closely than most of such orders, and consequently there is a marked decline in grave-jewels from that date.

The Crusaders who fought in the Holy Land met there with a more complete and civilized culture than their own, and were greatly influenced by it. They looted vast quantities of pagan gems, which they often presented to the Church on their return to their native land. These gems were used by the English Church to adorn its shrines and priestly vestments. Thus cameos and intaglios of pagan gods and goddesses were renamed after the figures of Christianity: Venus was called the Virgin Mary, Jupiter was an Archangel, and winged Cupids were known as cherubim.

Classical cameos were used to adorn the robes of bishops. Triptyches of the Virgin were enriched with cabochon crystals and cameos of Roman gods and goddesses. But much pagan jewellery was also used to adorn the lay garments of the wealthy.

Pilgrimages, which were such a feature of the Middle Ages,



brought enormous treasure to the Churches. Pilgrims acquired virtue by giving their riches to the famous shrines, in exchange for which they received a small lead badge of the saint whose shrine they had come to worship. The shrine of St Thomas à

Becket attracted at least 100,000 pilgrims every year. The scallop-shell emblems of St James of Compostella were so highly esteemed that they exchanged hands many times at increasing prices, being regarded as strongly potent magic amulets.

These emblems or badges were called "enseignes," and were cast on the premises of the shrine, each shrine having its own lead-foundry for this purpose. Each enseigne was cast with holes in it to enable it to be sewn on the pilgrim's hat. Many such enseignes have been recovered from the beds of rivers (a frequent source of such discoveries). When the Reformation closed down the shrines and stopped the pilgrimages, much wealth was taken away from shrines. That of St Thomas à Becket alone yielded more gold and jewels than eight strong men could carry away.

Fragments of the True Cross and prickles from the Crown of Thorns commanded enormous prices, and for their safeguarding were kept inside bean-shaped jewels which were made into reliquaries. Chaucer for one was highly sceptical as to the authenticity or the medicinal value claimed for these reliquaries. The pardoner in *The Canterbury Tales* has for stock-in-trade a pillow-case he vows is the Virgin Mary's veil, and sacred relics in the form of a saint's bones; but, says Chaucer, they



VISIGOTH BUCKLE

Gold set with garnets. About  
A.D. 600.

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were nothing but "pigges bones." With these, however, he was able to earn more money in one day than an honest parson could earn "in monthes tweye."

The building and adorning of the great cathedrals of Europe absorbed most of the craftsmen's powers and time from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, after which the English Reformation diverted their talents in this country to individual display. Jewelled girdles, and in the late Middle Ages elaborate jewelled cawls, crowns, and ornamental buckles—these were the chief objects of a secular character which British goldsmiths had made up to them.

But there had been no limit to the extravagance and luxury of personal jewellery of a religious nature. If there had been no ear-rings or bracelets for ladies of the Middle Ages to wear (their ears and arms being covered by their dress) they had expended their wealth and desire for adornment in costly rosaries and gem-encrusted reliquaries. Rosaries were wrought in the finest gold, crystal, coral, pearl, ivory, gorgeously carved and from which a cross in still costlier gems was suspended. Some ladies instead of wearing their rosary round their necks attached it to their jewelled girdle or to a finger-ring instead. Rosary-makers did a thriving trade, and their headquarters were established in that part of the City of London still known as Paternoster Row. Poor people wore rosaries of plain wood.

Some ladies, instead of wearing a crucifix on their rosaries, preferred to have a minute relic or image of the Virgin Mary encased in a reliquary in the shape of an apple or pear. This reliquary was at other times filled with ambergris or some perfume believed, like the relic, to give protection from harm or cure for disease. It was this kind of reliquary which gradually developed into the 'pomander' (*pomme d'ambre*) which was so typical of the Tudor period.

Superstitious as we still are, despite nearly two thousand years of Christianity and an English Reformation as well, it should not be difficult for us to realize how deep-rooted was the belief in magic in the Middle Ages, and how closely interwoven were such beliefs with the practices of Christianity. The evil eye was dreaded, and there was such a panic fear of witches that any poor



old woman who suffered from warts and kept a pet black cat was suspect. Warts on the face were looked upon as the unerring mark of the witch, for it was believed the warts were extra nipples used for the devilish suckling of the witch's familiar. Once suspect, the witch was hauled before the Church to be tried by ordeal—thrown into a pond to prove by drowning that she was innocent—made to walk on hot coals, or burned at the stake.

Heresy-hunting and preoccupation with witchcraft caused such uneasiness that those who did not themselves believe in witchcraft were regarded as heretic and were therefore liable to the same treatment as witches. In 150 years, according to its own records, the Holy Office caused to be burned alive no fewer than 30,000 supposed witches, who "if they had been left unpunished would easily have brought the whole world to destruction." Protestants too, even after the Reformation, had a lively fear of witchcraft, and Puritans who sought in the New World the liberty to worship according to their conscience were themselves guilty of terrible witch-hunting.

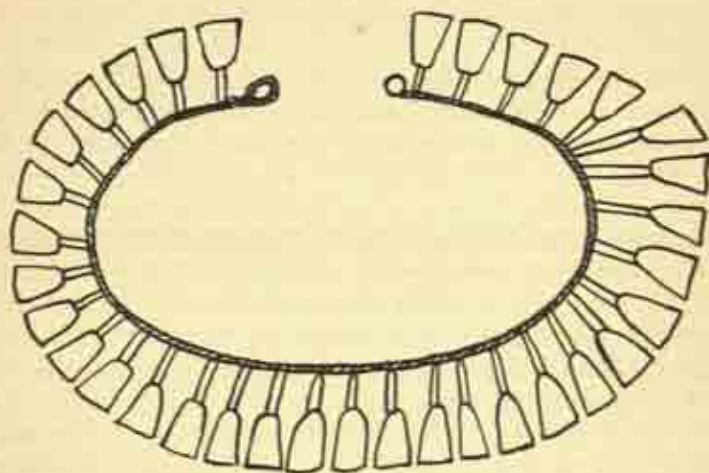
So that in the Middle Ages amulets and charms were worn alongside the crucifix to protect their wearers against witchcraft or for fear of being accused of heresy by not wearing them. Finger-rings were often engraved with holy saints (St Christopher being especially popular) or the last words of Christ on the Cross, in combination with a magic formula to cure toothache and epilepsy. Precious stones were worn which conferred magic powers—sapphires in a ring to cure eye-diseases, amber to stop goitre. Sapphires were particularly powerful and believed to act as antidote to poison, and to protect the chastity of their wearer. They were also believed to safeguard their wearer from poverty, wrongful arrest, betrayal, and conviction, and to preserve his reputation from malicious attack. Cardinals themselves wore a sapphire in their finger-rings, for it was commonly supposed to have been the stone upon which God gave the Law to Moses.

Medical knowledge was rudimentary and the Church preached against a scientific approach to its study. Men were glad to make use of any kind of insurance against calamity. In our own times Tibetan monks have made enormous profits from selling medicines



compounded from the nail-parings of the holy Dalai Lama to sick and credulous Tibetan peasants.

The pomander, which either contained different aromatic gums and perfumes in different compartments (sectioned like an orange) to ward off fevers, or else a sponge soaked in aromatic



NECKLACE OF HORSES' TEETH

East Peru, contemporary.

vinegar, became an essential part of ladies' dress. Many men also wore them, Cardinal Wolsey for one. It was worn for more than a century, and reached its zenith of beauty and luxury in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

Henry VIII—so typical of the Renaissance in his quick intelligence, artistic gifts, lingering superstition, and sartorial extravagances—owned seven jewelled toothpicks. He loved jewellery and always wore several rings on each hand. He possessed 234 finger-rings and 324 brooches, besides vast numbers of wide jewelled collars hung with rich pendants. He had a pendant of St George made entirely of diamonds and owned one diamond which was as large as a walnut. Holbein himself designed many of the King's jewels. Besides his rich display of formal jewels,

Henry VIII had his garments sewn all over with precious stones. The inventory of his wardrobe lists one tunic of purple velvet lined with gold tissue and fastening with diamond and ruby buttons and large Oriental pearls, the accompanying sword and girdle richly set with large emeralds, the bonnet covered with jewels to match, and the wide jewelled collar set with enormous rubies and pearls of fabulous cost.

At the Field of the Cloth of Gold the courtiers of both the French and English Kings were so gorgeously attired that du Bellay wrote: "They carried the price of woodland, watermill, and pastures on their backs"; and the men wore more jewellery than the women.

After the Reformation many superstitions connected with jewels and sacred relics lingered on. Fossilized shark's teeth, for instance, were still greatly prized as magically potent to ward off evil, and were hung round the necks of wealthy babies to enable them to cut their teeth and be safe from frights. As Henry VIII owned such a talisman, we may be sure he fastened it round the neck of his cherished and delicate son and heir Edward.

The splendour of Henry VIII's wardrobe was greatly surpassed by the gorgeousness of Queen Elizabeth and her Court, the jewels reaching a pitch of dazzling magnificence never equalled in any other English Court.

As there were no pockets in Elizabethan dress, girdles became very important. These girdles, wrought in precious metals and heavily encrusted with jewels, had suspended from them by means of finely jewelled chains such necessities as keys, purse, knife (for eating at table), scissors, toothpicks, ear-pick, fan, mirror, pomander, cosmetic-case, and prayer book. The Queen had a beautiful prayer book, two and a half inches long, bound in enamelled gold and set with a shell cameo, thus suspended from her girdle, besides a "rounde clocke fullie garnishede with dyamondes hanginge thereat." As watches became popular they were worn suspended from a waist-girdle, and this is the origin of the Regency fob and the nineteenth-century watch and chain.

A favourite form of ring in the Middle Ages was that inscribed with holy or magic words. This later developed into the 'posy'

or 'poesie' rings, exchanged as love-pledges between betrothed couples, with such mottoes engraved upon them as "I like I love as Turtle-dove," or "My dearest Betty is good and Pretty," or "This and the Giver are thine for ever." This fashion continued until the seventeenth century.

A betrothal was so binding in the Middle Ages that one ring served both for betrothal and for marriage. 'Gimnel-rings,' a corruption of *Jumelle* (twin), were two rings locked together which could be separated into two and were a popular betrothal gift.

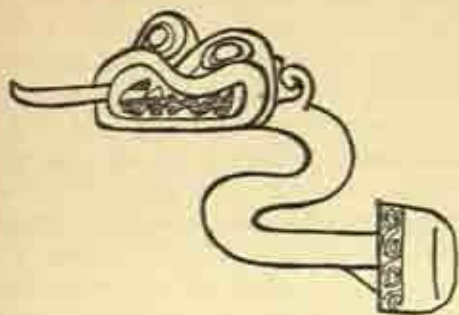
Elizabethan jewels are more remarkable for their large size and curious fancy than for delicate craftsmanship. They are in a sense *nouveau riche*. The religious motif of the Middle Ages gave place to emblems such as St George and the Dragon, Faith Hope and Fortitude, Tritons, mermaids, masted ships, and so on, carried out in enormous irregular pearls and great emeralds and rubies set against rich enamel and gold. These jewels were made from the fabulous precious stones seized by English sailors from Spanish treasure-ships, which had looted them from the South Americas and were returning to Spain, carrying their treasure in numbers of great chests containing one hundredweight each of rubies, emeralds, and pearls. The Spaniards looted so much treasure that in Madrid these precious stones were sold at public auction by the basketful.

With these twice-looted gems the stiff brocade gowns of Queen Elizabeth were closely studded, and so were the rich suits of her courtiers and to a lesser extent (for she did not encourage competition) of her ladies-in-waiting. On Court days Sir Walter Raleigh wore £7000 worth of jewels on his shoes alone (many times that amount in modern monetary values). Raleigh's armour was wrought in solid silver, and his sword and belt are reported to have been aflame with diamonds.

It was a period when pear-shaped pearls were greatly esteemed. It was fashionable for fine gentlemen to wear one immense pear-shaped pearl in one ear only. The mode survived until the time of Charles I, who went to his execution with such a pearl in his left ear. On the scaffold he took it off and presented it to a faithful follower.



Queen Elizabeth greatly increased her father's vast store of jewels, for she levied a regular toll on all treasure seized at sea, and



LIP ORNAMENT OF GOLD IN SHAPE OF  
SERPENT WITH MOVABLE TONGUE

Ancient Aztec; Oaxaca.

the jewel-merchants who thronged her Court knew she could never resist any strange new jewel. Her courtiers knew her weakness and always gave her New Year gifts of rich jewels curiously wrought into emblems full of allusion to her power and beauty and her command of the seas.

The Queen was described on one occasion as wearing

a heade of haire loaded with crownes and powdered with diya-mondes, with jewelled coronettes, gyrdles, necklaces, rings, pen-dantes, pynned on to her ruffe, boddy, and sleeves and alle over her dresse, besprynkled withe golden agulettes and hert stomacher en-crusted with large Roman pearles.

She rarely moved without losing some of her gems through their being insecurely fastened.

Mary Queen of Scots also loved jewellery dearly, and the inventory of her jewels specifies large quantities of rings, listed under two different headings—those "*bagues à mettre au doitz*" and "*bagues à pandre*."

Queen Elizabeth's collection of New Year gifts included rich necklaces and armlets with her motto worked in precious stones and fine enamels, jewelled brooches in the shape of crabs, lilies, and butterflies, etc. Sir Christopher Hatton's New Year gift to his sovereign in the year 1587 was a set of fifteen buttons of enamelled gold set with seed pearls in a flattering Latin inscription.

Queen Elizabeth herself gave jewels for New Year gifts, and to commemorate important events. Such was the "Golden Hind"

jewel she gave to Francis Drake. It was in the form of a ship, the hull of ebony set with a diamond, the mast and riggings of gold and coloured enamels set with seed pearls. Within the ship a Victory blowing her horn and Cupid crowning her with a wreath.

Early watches, which took the place of the portable sundials which it had been fashionable to carry in earlier times, were often made in shapes other than round—taking such forms as acorn, shell-shaped, death's head, oval, or elongated hexagonal. Queen Elizabeth had twenty such watches. They were becoming commoner by then. But when, during her brief reign, Catherine Howard gave Henry VIII in 1541 "a pomander of golde wherein is a clocke," they were a rare novelty.

It was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth that pomanders reached their peak. They were worn both as a health precaution and also purely for display. Necklaces of pomander beads were worn, and there were bracelets of pomander beads and even fan-handles of pomanders. Francis Bacon wrote of pomanders as a specific for "drying of rheums, comforting of the heart, and provoking of sleep."

Miniatures, at first known as "picture-boxes," became fashionable at this period. There exists a famous miniature of the Earl of Dorset, by Isaac Oliver, wherein the Earl is wearing trunk-hose embroidered with the sun, moon, and stars, in brilliant jewels. The planets were the object of the liveliest speculation, and Queen Elizabeth employed the learned Doctor Dee as her private astronomer.

The Renaissance was a period of great profusion in jewellery. Courtiers and rich merchants wore as many as three rings on each of their ten fingers, "up to the very nail." Rings were worn outside gloves, or the gloves were slashed to display the rings underneath. Sufferers from spasms (and there were many, perhaps owing to overeating and overdrinking) wore "anti-cramp" rings which were supposed to have been made from gold coins given by royalty on Good Friday to the offertory of Westminster Abbey, thus combining all the virtues, including that of royal healing.

The fossilized tooth of a fish was still believed to be a cure for dropsy and the spleen.

Gadget rings were also very popular, replacing the 'decade' or 'deckett' holy rings of the Middle Ages. These gadget rings contained a whistle, compass, or gold tobacco-stopper, or a 'writing diamond.' Italy at this period produced many famous poison rings, in which the bezel containing the poison had a hinged lid or a sliding panel. Another variety had a small hollow tube with a sharp point like a rattlesnake's fang which, on the ring being turned inward, inflicted a tiny fatal puncture during the process of shaking hands.

One of Gloriana's most interesting rings, possibly given her as a child by a sympathizer, was made of mother-of-pearl set with diamonds. The bezel had a secret opening which contained a tiny portrait of her mother, Anne Boleyn.

Puritans were so antagonistic to the wearing of so much jewellery that they even denounced plain wedding-rings as baubles. The Stuarts ushered in an era of more elegant jewellery, more refined and more subtle than the heavy gorgeousness of Elizabethan wear. By this time the cutting of gems was much more skilful, and it was no longer necessary to back them with dark foil, or paint them at the back to add to the brilliance lost in poor cutting.

James I had three famous pearls reset as a hat-ornament for his son. They were called the "three brethren," and the King sent them after him to Madrid, where he had gone with Buckingham, requesting him to wear them in his hat "with a little blakke feather." The single male ear-ring was still worn and sometimes strung on a black thread which was passed through the ear. Or else two odd ear-rings were worn.

The Civil War ruined collections of family jewels on both sides, quantities of jewels being broken up or melted down to raise funds both for Royalists and Roundheads. Henrietta Maria, who loved pearls and wore both chokers of large pearls and also strings of smaller pearls long enough to be worn twined round arms and waist, was obliged to sell or pawn all her magnificent jewels to raise funds to help the King in his fight against Parliament. In exchange for loans and jewels donated by his supporters, she gave them plain rings with only her cipher on them by way of adornment, H.M.R. Long after Charles I met his death on the scaffold



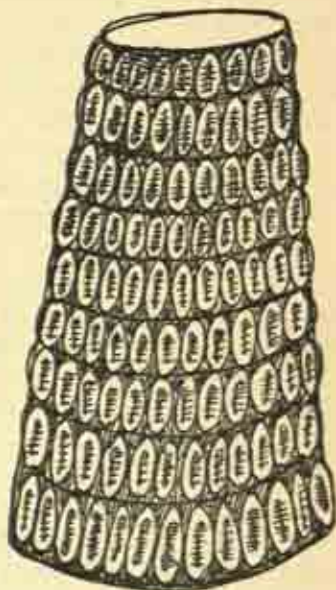
his followers secretly wore memorial rings for him. Often they contained his portrait in the bezel, which opened by means of a secret spring, or else a death's head with his name inside the bezel with a similar secret opening.

The cult of memorial jewellery began in the Middle Ages and took the form of a ring decorated with a skull or a gold skeleton or the monogram of the dead person with the date of his death worked in hair over the background, which was usually of gold. During the Civil War posy and wedding-rings were often converted into mourning rings by widows of the War. Wedding-rings changed their form also, and were now jewelled and ornamented with clasped hands holding a ruby heart, and inscribed with such verses as

In Godde above and Christe his sonne  
We two are joynd bothe in one.  
Knitte in one by Christe alone  
We joyne our love in God above.

It was customary in wills to leave provision for mourning jewellery. Speaker Lenthall thus bequeathed fifty mourning rings for his friends to remember him. Death rings were the only form of jewellery the Puritans did not object to. But they had to be grisly. Favourite kinds were the death's-head ring with the warning "Prepare for Death," or "As I am so you shall be," or 'hower-glasses,' to denote the swift passage of time to the grave, or a gold coffin which opened to show a tiny skeleton.

Worse than the depredations of war was the melting down of beautiful jewellery from a former period on the grounds that it was old-fashioned. This unfortunately is true of all inheritors of



ARMLET OF COWRIE SHELLS  
WORN IN ASSAM  
Contemporary.

jewellery, at all times. Much fine Tudor jewellery has thus been spoiled by melting down or remodelling. Stuart jewellery is particularly hard to come by intact as it suffered from all these causes—sold to raise funds; melted down by Georgian inheritors, if not previously melted down by the Puritans if it happened to display a royal emblem, in the belief that such jewels were unworthy of Christian Puritanism. So much was thus melted down that at the Restoration a new regalia had to be made in order that the new King might be crowned.

The taking of snuff and the wearing of patches, which were fashionable during the Restoration, gave jewellers an opportunity to produce a great variety of elegant snuff- and patch-boxes. Fashionable people liked to carry about three or four different ones in different pockets. The handles of ladies' fans (and gentlemen's, for they too used fans at Court and evening assemblies) were elaborately jewelled, and from the Elizabethan girdle there developed the new 'chatelaine,' which was used to carry keys, watch, fan, snuff-box, and patch-box (for ladies took snuff as well as gentlemen).

The most typical form of eighteenth-century jewellery is the rich buckle. Jewelled buckles were used to fasten stocks, ruffles, breeches at the knee, and shoes. Men, women, and children all wore numbers of buckles at throat, wrist, shoulder, and waist, and on their shoes. These buckles were at first elegantly small and neat, but they soon grew larger and larger and progressively more costly, until gold and precious stones were *de rigueur* for gentlemen's shoe-buckles. When late in the eighteenth century the fashion changed from shoe-buckles to shoe-strings, both the jewellers and the buckle-makers raised so loud an outcry that they were being ruined that sympathetic theatre managements displayed notices outside their theatres announcing: GENTLEMEN CANNOT BE ADMITTED WITH SHOE-STRINGS.

What precipitated the passing of shoe-buckles was the upheaval of the French Revolution, for shoe-buckles were looked upon, in the same way as the powdered wig, as a mark of the aristocrat—so much so that exiled aristocrats, returning to France after the Revolution had quietened down, reverted to wearing powdered wigs and costly shoe-buckles, even though the fashion

by then had completely changed, in order to display their aristocracy. And Napoleon, anxious to attract emigré aristocrats to his all-too-plebeian Court, revived knee-breeches, shoe-buckles, and wigs for Court dress.



NECKLACE OF BONE AND KIMMERIDGE COAL

Early British.

Many patriotic ladies during the French Revolution gave their jewels to the Public Treasury to enable the country to repel her invaders. These ladies proudly wore bits of stone from the fallen Bastille made into brooches and mounted as finger-rings. Madame de Genlis, governess to his children and mistress of the Duc d'Orléans, wore such a memento. She wore it in a medallion—the fragment of Bastille stone being polished and engraved in brilliants with the word *liberté*, and above this the sun of July 14, below the moon in the precise phase of that famous night, and surrounding all a garland of laurel-leaves worked in emeralds. This patriotic medallion was suspended from a cockade made out of red, white, and blue gems.

Napoleon's Egyptian campaign and the excavation of Herculaneum and Pompei brought the cameo into favour. Cameos were the Empress Josephine's favourite jewels, and she liked to wear necklaces made entirely of cameos strung together. In England Josiah Wedgwood's famous kilns had for some time



already been turning out cameos in the esteemed classical style for making into rings, brooches, and bracelets.

The tight male clothes of the Regency furthered the display of fobs, worn outside the pantaloons so that the cutaway coat allowed them to be seen to advantage. Seals were worn dangling in bunches, or two bunches. Two watches were sometimes worn to give a symmetrical effect, one watch always being imitation. Ladies also carried two watches in the same way—one of them being a real watch, the other a pin-cushion.

The nineteenth century gave rise to a new class of wealthy manufacturers and their hangers-on. New materials came into fashion for those who could not afford real gold and real jewels. Jasper, agate, copper-gilt, and pinchbeck began to be worn. And these were often no longer made by hand, but by machinery in factories to which French jeweller-apprentices had to be sent to study their own craft, their guilds having been dissolved in the Revolution.

What to do with the luxury trades is a problem which crops up at every revolution. The Russian Revolution of 1917 tried to solve this problem by putting the luxury jewellers to work on public maps wrought in precious metals, with the towns and important sites of new industries, etc., marked in large gems. The huge red star now above the Kremlin, which sways with the wind like a weather-vane, is made out of thousands of solid rubies and when lit at night from below glows like a strange planet and can be seen from a long way off.

Similarly, one of the newest stations of the Moscow Metro is decorated with blue and white porcelain plaques adorned with ducat gold.

The Romantic period brought out a flood of sentimental jewellery such as brooches with ladies mourning beside willow-trees. Lord Byron kept hair-relics in rings. He was typical of his time, which clung superstitiously to fetishes, despite its liberal principles. There was a real craze for hair-work—the hair of a loved one being mounted under crystal, or in the form of entwined initials or the inevitable lady weeping over a tombstone. Watch-chains and bracelets were made of human hair, and the *ferronière* was revived. Jewellers advertised their wares thus: *ALL*

KINDS OF HAIR DEVICES IN THE MOST ELEGANT STYLE. Devoted lovers wore a tooth from the jaw of their beloved mounted as a tie-pin.

Dandies required several rings at the same time to keep their cravats in order. These cravat-rings sometimes took the form of twisted gold-wire puzzle-rings, or else the jewels would be set in a special order which spelled: R (ruby) E (emerald) G (garnet) A (amethyst) R (ruby) D (diamond) S (sapphire). The chate-laine had by now become an essential part of ladies' dress and carried button-hook, migraine-powders, smelling-salts, scissors, *étui*.

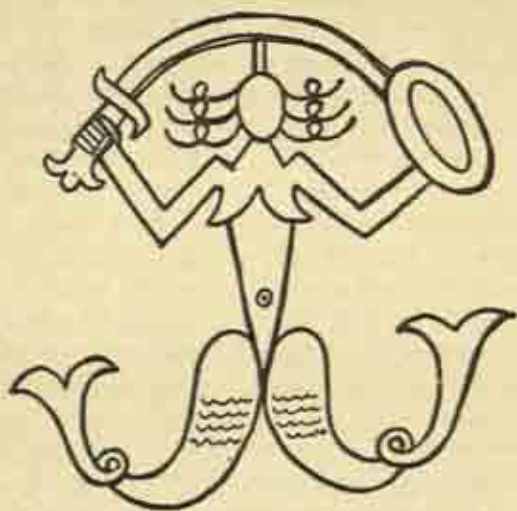
A typical romantic gold parure of this period is made of ivy-leaves and owls—thus suggesting, in a genteel and expensive manner, ruined towers, death, and melancholy decay. A bouquet-holder of silver filigree was considered indispensable for young ladies going to Victorian balls. There was also the mode for wearing a small flat bottle (tucked into the bosom of the ball-gown) to contain a little water into which were put the stems of the fresh flowers which were so essential to the adornment of every young lady.

The late nineteenth century was a period of very heavy and ostentatious jewellery. The jewellery of the 1914 War verged on the exotic. "The anklet," says *Vogue* in 1916, "is slowly creeping into favour. Certain robes d'intérieur fairly shriek aloud for the anklet. One, very new and very smart, is made of pearls, strung on silver wire, and just over the instep swings a cube of diamonds from a short diamond chain."

In 1926 the Cubist movement affected jewellery considerably. New kinds of necklaces and brooches were worn suggesting the nuts and bolts of industrial machinery and quite displacing the enormous pseudo-Oriental brooches and rings of the 'Bakst-Poiret' period immediately preceding it. Long, perfectly plain earrings were very popular while the dresses were knee-length or even shorter, and chokers of beads as large as ping-pong balls.

Our present day is essentially a time for paste jewellery, which is frankly worn at all hours of day or evening and makes no pretence to be anything more than 'amusing.' Paste is, of course, far from new. It is as old as jewellery itself.

Fake gems and ornaments of base metal have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. False jewels and impure gold have been found in Roman ruins. Fourteenth-century alchemists left recipes behind them for making imitation gems out of glass (false rubies, emeralds, garnets, and turquoise). Benvenuto Cellini swore that Henry VIII paid a very high price for an emerald



SILVER BROOCH

1½ inches square. Contemporary Polish. The mermaid is the heraldic device of the City of Warsaw.

made out of glass. More recently Hermann Goering complained at Nuremberg of being similarly tricked by French jewellers during the Nazi occupation of Paris.

Fake rubies were constructed from tiny chips of real rubies or two stones doubled, the real one uppermost. Imitation pearls were made five hundred years ago or more in Venice of glass beads soaked in fish-scales. Colourless zircons have been repeatedly traded as diamonds, and so on. In the eighteenth century glass gems were so modish that a company was formed in Paris in 1767 under the trade name of "Joilliers-faussetiers" of those jewellers making glass beads, false pearls, and cheap trinkets for



popular consumption. European traders in Africa found it profitable to exchange five such large glass beads for a valuable ivory elephant tusk, for that was then the usual rate of exchange. (David Livingstone in 1850 quoted the market price of a Negro slave boy as nine yards of cotton or baize.)

Eighteenth-century paste was usually so beautifully designed and carefully executed that it is to-day as valuable as real jewels on account of the fine work put into its making. It was not only worn by poorer people. Great ladies were accustomed to wear paste jewellery when travelling, for fear of highwaymen, and with daytime dresses as being more suitable. Marie-Antoinette herself had many paste jewels. Both Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry wore paste jewellery, such as ear-rings with imitation amethysts, etc. At the French Court were to be found paste diamonds, pinchbeck, cut steel, and pewter used as a setting for false diamonds.

Dr Quin, a professor of the University of Dublin, settled in London to manufacture paste jewellery in 1766, and made so great a reputation with his wares that the Empress of Russia ordered a complete set of every model he turned out, which ran to thousands.

During the Napoleonic wars patriotic German ladies gave up their jewels to the national coffer and took to wearing iron jewellery instead. Much of this still survives. During the 1939 War so desperate was the desire to wear jewellery of some kind that street-hawkers did a roaring trade selling ordinary buttons with clips attached as ear-rings (and for high prices).

To-day paste is no longer considered in bad taste. What counts in general is the design. Czechoslovakia has made a fine reputation for her paste jewellery, carefully designed by a panel of good artist-jewellers, in which common glass and base metals are so skilfully and boldly treated that all classes of European and American women are delighted to wear them, and do in fact often prefer to wear them even when they possess, as some rich ladies still do possess, valuable jewellery made of real gold and real gems.

These real jewels are to-day often prudently kept under lock and key in the bank to avoid the danger of being stolen by one of the many gangs of clever thieves, such as those who made scoops

within recent years of the jewellery of the Duchess of Windsor or the then Begum Ali Khan's fine collection. So that real jewels are hidden away in safes in dark vaults, while false jewels take the glitter of candelabra in Society.

A curious sidelight on present-day burglaries is that many cases occur of jewel-thefts by young gentlemen in Society who, being short of money and knowing the architectural plan of the houses they are visiting, do some looting during their social visits. These cases never come before the ordinary police courts. But nevertheless they occur.

This chapter on jewellery cannot be completed without some reference to the famous antique jewellers known to all contemporary Londoners as "Cameo Corner." Its owner (himself the designer of rare and strange jewels in animal shape), Mosheh Oved, has a remarkable collection of Oriental and Asiatic jewels, which, through being admired and worn by artists and social leaders in many capitals, has had its influence on the trend of fashion.

This influence may be summed up in Mosheh Oved's own words: "The Arabians decorate their horses more beautifully than the Europeans their women."



FINGER-RING, BY MOSHEH OVED  
Silver with gold eyes. Contemporary.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SUMPTUARY LAWS: EXTREMES AND ENCROACHMENTS

*Length of shoes permitted to extend beyond toes:*

For a nobleman	. . . . .	24 inches or more
For a gentleman	. . . . .	12 inches
For a commoner	. . . . .	6 inches

*Sumptuary Law (Early Middle Ages)*

EVERY authority on the history of costume has developed a different theory to explain the vagaries of fashion. These theories vary according to the prevailing spirit of the age just as much as do the costumes themselves. At the present time it is fashionable to lean heavily upon a psychological explanation for everything to do with the mode. Professor Flugel has taken this as far as it may well go. Dr Cunningham, whose encyclopædic knowledge has the additional weight of his authority as a medical man, leans in this direction. Mr James Laver, no less a learned authority, has developed—very winningly—the theory that all fashions aim at sexual seduction. Mrs Doris Langley Moore has developed the theory that fashion aims at bolstering up social status. It is this last theory which the present writer, with all deference to these distinguished authorities, would like to develop a little further.

Clothes, even in the most primitive societies, display sharply marked differences according to the precise social position of the wearer. A chief will dress differently from his tribesmen, a rich tribeswoman differently from a poor one, even though the wealth be a mere matter of a couple of cows or a few cowrie shells.

In present times, it is true, all men in the Western world, from



kings to dustmen, wear the same style of clothes. But there is no mistaking the cut, the material, the details of the rich man's dress. And though a duke to-day does not stroll down Piccadilly dressed in elegant satins with his ducal star blazing on his breast for all to see and pay homage, it will be obvious from his bowler hat and well-made overcoat, from the distinction of his gloves and his expensive umbrella, that if he has to work for a living then it is as director of various companies, and not as a garage-hand.

Women are more adaptable than men. They can climb more easily and more rapidly out of the social class in which they find themselves. How many Gaiety girls married into the English peerage and there filled their new rôles with grace and distinction? It is less easy to-day to detect a woman's income at first glance from her dress than it was fifty years ago. Observers at popular dance-halls to-day sometimes find it impossible to guess the exact social status of the girl dancers, for typists and shop-girls often dress with the distinction of their social superiors. To-day, as in past centuries, clothes in the Western world are for men and women alike a potent weapon in the most bitter of all wars—that is, class warfare.

Fashion is a knife used to draw a firm line between the noble by birth and the less so, the richer and the poorer. Extravagance is employed by those above to outwit those below from copying. When a rising middle-class can afford to copy extravagant dress, then the social leaders fight to keep their position in society by other extravagances, such as extreme simplicity, or styles too daring for respectable men and women to follow. All these tactics have been tried again and again in the history of fashion—that is, in the history of "class war."

We live to-day in a society in which money is the decisive factor, and it is therefore how much is expended upon their clothes that marks out the leaders of society, a fact well recognized by the glossy magazines which take endless trouble to report with meticulous detail exactly what was worn by whom at Society functions.

Let us examine how this dress warfare has been conducted in the past.

In the Middle Ages, when the Church's voice was supreme, the authority of the Church was used to enforce social distinctions, and it still tends to do so. Men may be equal in the sight of God, but on earth they are commanded to stay in that station of life into which they were born. But the desire to rise in the world is like steam in a kettle. The struggle between the king and his nobles was marked by intrusions upon his sartorial privileges, the struggle between gentlemen and nobles was marked by the defiant wearing by gentlemen of garments that the Church decreed the privilege of nobles, and the bitter struggle between the middle classes and the working classes was and is illustrated by constant poaching, copying, and imitation, however severely punished in the past. It is because the Church always rallies to the support of the ruling class that revolutions so often find themselves in conflict with the Church.

This was true of the Cromwellian Revolution, the French Revolution, and of the Russian Revolution. The supporters of Cromwell were deeply devout, but they acknowledged no allegiance to the near-Catholic religion of their sovereign. Cromwell's troops even stabled their horses in the beautiful crypt chapel of the House of Commons, having first whitewashed the "idolatrous" wall-paintings.

The French Revolutionaries were anti-God and anti-Church. They even set up a pagan "Goddess of Reason" in Notre-Dame cathedral itself. She was a pretty little actress dressed up in pseudo-Greek chiffon robes. Sturdy patriots went so far as to have themselves de-baptised and renamed new names which had no awkward associations with Christian saints.

Allons, Bravo, point de scrupule!  
Débaptisons-nous, mes amis;  
S'appeler Jean, Jacques ou Denis  
Tenez, rien n'est plus ridicule,

urged a handbill published in 1792. Less than two years later the shifting tides of the Revolution had brought the necessity for spiritual authority back into fashion. Robespierre himself was the author and David the designer of the sumptuous "Fête de l'Être Suprême," which, though still anti-priest and with a strong pagan flavour, was no longer anti-God.



A thirteen-year-old girl named Ziguette C—, living with her mother and governess in Paris, wrote an account of this fête to her father, who was an architect and was away building a theatre in Provence.

I woke before five and rose at six in order not to be late. Our house was all decorated with garlands and branches of oak. I wore a linen caraco with a tricoloured sash and a fichu embroidered with red cotton. My hair was all done up in nine little plaits over muslin folded in the Greek style. We each took an oak branch in our hand, and some bread and chocolate.

She goes on to describe the triumphal effigies of Justice, Fidelity, and the People of France trampling its enemies; how the president himself had set alight the figure of Atheism, which as it burned disclosed a statue of Wisdom; of the triumphal chariot drawn by eight bullocks with gilded horns, led by six young men in pantaloons and Phrygian bonnets; how at half-past six the multitude intoned the new hymn, cried "Vive la République!" and threw flowers. "My hair was full of them. We seemed to be transported to the days of Greek Festivals. At seven when it was all over we were simply dying of thirst and of hunger and very tired."

Sumptuary laws have been a useful, if not always effective, means of enforcing class privilege. For men and women, in their absolute determination to struggle into a higher social class, while at the same time jealously preventing any intrusion into their own class from the class below, have risked fines, imprisonment, and even death itself. Consequently new sumptuary laws have been constantly necessary.

In ancient Greece Solon was obliged to introduce a sumptuary law forbidding ambitious Greek women from wearing more than three garments at a time for festivals and funerals. At the same time the display of the naked body was a class privilege reserved for Greek youths of good family and absolutely forbidden to slaves.

The Romans regulated the dress of each class and each age with the utmost precision by the enforcement of the strictest sumptuary laws. And when these laws began to be disregarded it



marked the decadence and eventual dissolution of the Roman Empire.

Freed Roman slaves were permitted to mark their new status by wearing a *pileus*, or crimson cap of liberty, which was revived at the time of the French Revolution with wild enthusiasm. The *mob* cap, a style which spread from Revolutionary France all over Europe, owes its name to the Revolutionary mob of women who helped to storm the Bastille. Once the style caught on such caps were worn in other countries than France, by ladies of the strongest Tory principles who would have been outraged at the suggestion that they were copying a mode from their enemies.

Nobles in the Middle Ages by the extravagance of their dress spent their fortune on their backs and frequently ruined themselves, not merely in order to outvie their social inferiors, but in the effort to outclass their social equals. It may be that in the Middle Ages there was little else for a man of fashion to spend his riches on other than personal display, for his lands were cultivated by his serfs and the pleasures of the table came to him by levy from the same source—while the delights of travel were confined to the circumference of his estates or the adventure of the Crusades. Nobles of the Renaissance too preferred, on the whole, to lavish their wealth on personal display than to buy books or works of art or to send out expeditions to new lands. The famous schools set up in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in this country are almost all the gifts of commercial companies or individually wealthy tradesmen.

Wealthy people to-day, and there are still some despite soaring taxation (it is even estimated that there are actually more millionaires in England than there were before the War), can ruin themselves in a dozen different ways. They can acquire art treasures, furnish sumptuous country houses and town residences, keep a yacht in commission, back theatrical enterprises, and so on. They are less likely to ruin themselves by tailors' bills, since to-day it is not considered good form for a gentleman to wear obviously much richer clothes than other men wear. The wives of rich men, though they may spend enormous sums on their clothes and jewels, will hardly approach the sartorial extravagance of their ancestors.

Even queens to-day have other ways of appearing rich and powerful than by dressing with obvious extravagance. In an unstable epoch such as this, it is not wise to appear too ostentatiously garbed. How different from Marie-Antoinette and her style of dress. We need only mention her famous necklace that became so potent a factor in the French Revolution.

This fabulous diamond necklace was made in 1785 by the Paris jewellers Boehmer and Bassange, in the expectation that Marie-Antoinette, who rarely could resist a new toy, would purchase it. The necklace, which made no pretensions to beauty, but solely dazzling splendour, contained dozens of large perfectly matched diamonds which the jewellers had spent many years patiently collecting. Seventeen large diamonds the size of filberts supported a circle of diamond festoons, framing diamond pendants shaped into pears, stars, and clusters. From the festoons hung elaborate diamond tassels. The effect was that of a fully lit, gorgeous chandelier.

The price the jewellers demanded for this amazing necklace was £90,000 in the currency of the day (now, of course, enormously more). Though she would have liked to buy it, the Queen (so she said) dared not spend this large sum of money which had already been allocated to the needs of the Navy. The jewellers' agent on (false?) instructions handed over the necklace secretly by night to a closely veiled lady in the honest belief that she was either the Queen or the Queen's lady-in-waiting.

At this point the famous necklace vanishes. The Queen denied everything and refused to pay the bill. The jewellers, maintaining that they were acting under the Queen's orders, took the case to court. The affair caused a resounding scandal, bankrupting the jewellers and ruining the Queen.

In the tangle of intrigue and conflicting evidence the truth will probably never be known. Whether the Queen did in fact order the necklace and then lose her nerve? Whether she did or did not send the fatal instructions to hand over the necklace secretly by night? If she did, whether it was she or her deputy who received the necklace in the moonlit garden? If not, then, who forged the instructions and who was the imposter who did take the necklace? It is one of the most baffling mysteries in history.



At the time most French people believed that the Queen (who was highly unpopular) had ordered the necklace, for she was known to be extravagant. Whether she actually ordered the necklace or not, it seems certain that it was a gang of clever thieves who finally tricked the jewellers of their treasure. It seems likely that the spectacular necklace was immediately broken up and the separate diamonds distributed all over Europe and gradually sold. Some of them are believed to have found a market in London. The whole affair throws a lurid light upon the life of the Court at a time when France was rushing towards revolution, and the repercussions of the case of the Queen's necklace helped to sweep Marie-Antoinette to the guillotine.

Down tumbled all the elaborate edifice of Royal panoply and stately court etiquette—such as that, described by Mme Campan, at the Queen's levée; the process of her dressing being distinguished from that of lesser ladies by her linen being handed ceremoniously from one to another of her attendant countesses and duchesses while she stood shivering with nothing on at all except her nightcap.

Marie-Antoinette was more typical of the sartorial extravagance of royalty than the Emperor Charlemagne, who, in order to teach his extravagant nobles to dress with economy, invited them to a hunt. The Emperor appeared clad in a simple sheepskin and himself directed the hunt, to which his nobles had come sumptuously attired in their richest gowns and trailing peacock's feathers. The Emperor led the hunt through thick brambles so that the rich garments of his nobles were torn to shreds and their brave feathers torn out. Rain finally completed the destruction. Charlemagne, to enforce the lesson, contrived to make his courtiers hang about the palace in their wet clothes and ordered them to appear the following day in the same attire. He then showed them his sheepskin garment, which was dry and untorn, with the rebuke, "*Elle ne m'a coûté qu'un sou. Comparez-la à vos costumes que vous avez payé de centaines de livres et dites-moi si vous n'êtes pas fous!*"

Less exceptional were Richard II of England and Henry III, both of whom were obliged to pawn the crown jewels to pay for the extravagance of their dress.



A few sumptuary laws must suffice to explain how precisely they were intended to enforce class distinction.

In the Middle Ages the exact length of the toes of shoes were defined by law for each class. No one under the rank of nobleman was permitted to wear the improperly short tunic. In the reign of Edward IV a fine of 6s. 8d. was inflicted on the tailor who had the temerity to bombast the dress of any customer below the rank of yeoman. There were severe sumptuary laws regulating mourning dress in the same way. At the end of the fifteenth century a sumptuary law was passed which restricted the amount of material used for mourning wear to sixteen yards for a duke, fourteen yards for an earl, twelve for a viscount, eight for a baron, and for lesser people no more than two yards was allowed by law.

Elizabethan sumptuary laws forbade the use of velvet, save as mere trimming, to women of less than noble rank, and the use of silk altogether to men and women of no higher status than middle class. The Queen also took great pains to confine her female subjects to the wearing of ruffs at least two years behind the fashion. Her subjects fought back vigorously, young ladies of rank employing the Dutch starch expert, Mistress Dinghem van den Plasse, at high fees, to teach them the art of starching ruffs—and not merely white but also blue and goose-green. Elizabeth then gave orders to the guards on duty at the gates of London to cut off extra width of ruff beyond that permitted by her regulations.

Perhaps her efforts were undertaken not only because of the feminine vanity which they appear to exhibit. It should be remembered her own social position had been dubious and was still not absolutely secure. She had at one time been officially excluded from legal right to the throne by her own father, Henry VIII, and there were also not a few of her Roman Catholic subjects who heartily wished her off the throne in order to place there Mary Queen of Scots, and were even actively plotting to that end. So there was a sound State reason for Queen Elizabeth to desire to wear bigger ruffs than anyone else in her kingdom.

The height of headdresses, the length of trains, the value of material, the amount and order of fur, the length of shoes, the



*Gentleman's Widow*



*Noble Widow of Exalted Rank*

#### THE "BARBE"

Degrees of mourning wear permitted to widows. English Middle Ages. Widows declared their precise status by wearing a specially pleated bib known as a 'barbe' from its proximity to the chin. The higher the barbe the greater the social cachet. Ladies below the rank of baroness were condemned to fasten their barbes beneath the chin. Those of humbler rank still lower. Ladies of the noblest rank mourned their dead husbands in barbes raised so high that they covered the chin and mouth as well.

width of shoes, the degree of weight and transparency of material, the colours of the dress, all these have been the subject of carefully framed laws enacted with one specific purpose in mind—to keep people in their own classes. Thomas Occleve (1400) expressed the idea neatly in these lines:

If in you and your men no difference  
Be in array, less is your reverence.

Once a man began to ape his betters, even in the smallest detail of dress and even when he could afford to do so, there was no knowing where it would end. And the reason blue was chosen for the colour of servants' liveries was because it was the accepted medieval colour for faithfulness and servitude. Just as green was the accepted colour for wanton and frail love. Hence the popular song about "Lady Greensleeves," the lady being a courtesan.

John Evelyn, visiting Venice in 1645, wrote: "It is ridiculous to see how these Venetian ladies crawl in and out of their gondolas by reason of their choppines, and what dwarfs they appear when taken down from their scaffolds." The noblest ladies wore them eighteen inches high and needed two maids to assist them to walk (a perfect example of prestige before comfort).

It is interesting that Puritan emigrants to the New World failed to leave behind them the conception that social inequality must be enforced by sumptuary laws. A Puritan law passed in Massachusetts in 1639 reads thus: "Be it enacted that hereafter no persons whatever shall make a garment for woman or any other sex with sleeves more than an ell wide in the widest part and so proportionately for smaller or bigger persons."

We may be sure that the richest colonists took good care to wear their sleeves wider than the regulated width. For they became the Governors and the Magistrates themselves.

A sumptuary law passed in Chicago in 1895 decreed that: "All cycle-riders must wear baggy continuations. No knicker knee-breeches or revealed stockings are permissible, but full and loose nether garments down to the heels." Except, as always, for wealthy riders, who might dress as they chose since they held the reins of authority and power.

To-day, though sumptuary laws would appear to be a thing of



the past, there are strict rules on some beaches in Spain and Malta forbidding ladies to wear a two-piece bathing-dress (sometimes even forbidding men to wear bathing trunks instead of a garment which hides the body from shoulders to knees). But rich people who can afford villas with private bathing beaches are, it seems, immune from such laws.

To-day the possession of wealth has almost entirely supplanted the privilege of rank. Sumptuary laws have become a matter of pocket rather than caste. The poorer desperately try to copy the garments of the richer, who, to preserve their exclusiveness, are obliged to patronize the most expensive Paris houses, whose models, copied instantly and without delay put into mass production in cheaper materials, barely have an exclusive life of their own of more than about five weeks. It is a short triumph for a garment that may cost hundreds of pounds.

Silk and rich satins can now be imitated by rayons and nylons and are much worn by women who fifty years ago could never have hoped to dress with such an appearance of luxury. Therefore to be thought exclusive the richest ladies took up and made modish such a formerly plebeian material as corduroy, once the garb of the working-man. This material has been elevated by the dressmakers into a luxury material and costs a good deal to buy. It has, however, become so fashionable that it is now being cast aside by the smartest ladies in search of something more exclusive.

The rich black silk dress, fifty years ago the undisputed mark of the lady, can now be found in cheap rayons in every woman's wardrobe. Dressmakers of the great houses rack their brains for new methods of making the "little black dress" worth the fantastic price they must charge for their models. Touches of subtlety, so subtle as to appear almost non-existent, are fighting a steadily losing battle against the encroachment of clever cutting and superficial elegance that are now obtained quite cheaply in mass-produced gowns. The costliest furs still give those who can afford them a chance to demonstrate their social superiority. And that this strikes a telling blow can be demonstrated by the names given to the cheaper furs by wily salesmen. "Mink marmot" may well be marmot, but it has nothing at all to do with mink; "coney" sounds so much better than "rabbit." Here we have class

snobbery in its essence, the snobbery which tries to deceive itself by giving an object the name of a socially superior one. Thus 'paying guest' instead of 'lodger,' an expression now so tainted by its pretentiousness that the use of the word 'lodger' is good form in well-bred circles, where such expedients to meet the rising cost of living are commoner than may be supposed.



SURTLE FOLDS OF  
THE EXPENSIVE MODEL.

Stiebel evening gown of oyster poul with asymmetric drapery. English, 1932.

simple cotton, while the children of the poor dress in (imitation) rich silks, such as wealthy children wore a generation ago.

"In an age like the present," declares the gentlemanly author of a book on the art of neckwear published in 1828,

when the man of quality is so closely imitated by the pretender, when the amalgamation of all ranks seems to be the inevitable consequence of the 'March of Intellect' now making such rapid strides

When all else fails and their expensive clothes styled in rich materials have been quickly copied and thereby rendered futile for the purpose of aggrandisement, Society leaders have no other choice than to dress with the utmost simplicity in clothes of little intrinsic value so far as the material goes, but of highly expensive cut. They thus hope to defeat the aspirations of poorer women, whose taste might be supposed to run to something more showy, and to discourage them from imitating again. An example of this to-day may be readily found in the clothes children wear—the offspring of the richest families often being clad in



amongst us, we think a more signal service cannot be rendered to the higher ranks of society than by the production of such a work as this.

There used to be a special little shop for such "pretenders" in Lamb's Conduit Street, Bloomsbury, where, by means of a patent nose machine, hopelessly pug noses could be changed to a distinguished aquiline. In 1894 it was still doing a lively trade.

In order to enable the privileged to demonstrate their social ascendancy, fashions have reached at different times the utmost extremes of height, weight, tightness, looseness, concealment of the body, exposure of the body, and absolute discomfort to the point of the severe endangering of the health. And nothing has availed to change the particular fashion during its triumph, nor to retain it the moment it has begun to date.

And what is meant by 'dating' is that the style is being too closely imitated by people of less social distinction. Social aggrandisement is the reason why hennins have soared over a yard into the air or shot out sideways four feet. Social aggrandisement is the reason why the accompanying gowns have swept the ground *all round* for at least three feet—"like the trains of peacocks only a thousand times longer," as a thirteenth-century poet remarked. In order to enforce her social superiority by means of such a dress, it was necessary for a fashionable lady to throw out her stomach and kick her gown before her from the inside, step by step, if she were to walk at all, at the same time holding her head rigid lest it be jerked too far backward by the tall structure on top of it.

At the marriage of Mary Stuart to the French Dauphin, Elizabeth of Valois, who later became Queen of Spain, contrived to dance a lively coranto while wearing a dress with an eighteen-foot train which had to be carried by a page throughout the dance. At the Court of Versailles diamond shoe-buckles were not enough to distinguish the noblest gentlemen from those of lesser rank, so the noblest courtiers took to wearing brocade shoes with a line of emeralds up the line of the heels. The Duchesse d'Orleans demonstrated her social superiority by wearing on her head figures of her eldest son; the Comte de Beaujolais in his nurse's arms; her parrot plucking at a cherry; her Negro boy; and models



of several other members of her family, including her husband, the Duc d'Orléans, made out of hair from their own heads. No one could possibly imitate that fetish headdress.

The clinging muslin gown of 1800, based by David originally on Greek dress in the endeavour to find a democratic formula for all classes of women to wear, was immediately exaggerated by the leaders of the Society of that day, mistresses of politicians and courtesans thrown up in the cauldron of the Revolution. Since white muslin could be copied by any little midinette, it was vital for the socially distinguished to have very many dresses, and show them off by frequent changes. The time-table of a fashionable lady included at least three changes of dress in the morning alone:

8 A.M.: A Chinese bath in a stylish peignoir.

9 A.M.: Déjeuner au chocolat in a robe à la créole.

12: A ride or walk in the Bois de Boulogne dressed à la pomone.

And in the afternoon and evening many more such changes.

In England Lady Caroline Lamb wore more *osé* styles than other women dared, to show her rank, and when that did not serve to distinguish her sufficiently, borrowed her page's clothes. When the Romantic movement had established the desirability of an interesting pallor, the smartest ladies used quantities of dead-white rice face-powder in order to give themselves a more fashionably corpse-like complexion than their inferiors. And those with stubbornly rosy cheeks even resorted to bleeding to make themselves look pale. The *Ladies' Journal* at this time described the transparency of the complexions of the royal Princesses at an English Court ball as "nearly approaching the celestial."

It was fashionable to pine. Women with vulgar duties to perform, and consequently no time to moon about, could not hope to attain the prestige of those ladies in Society to whom the *Belle Assemblée* said: "There is no spot more calculated to open in the mind a train of more melancholy yet useful reflections than the interior of a hospital. The churchyard alone takes a higher grade in the cause of instruction."

Not only was it by means of a series of simple white chemise frocks that a lady could be made to display rank and wealth.

Carriages were also a key to social position. They had to be renewed continually to keep ahead of the next aspirant to distinction. "On est obligé," wrote La Mésangère, "de faire remonter sa voiture aussi souvent que son chapeau."

And the smartest ladies wore hats so tall and cylindrical, and crowned by such a high cluster of ostrich plumes, that they had to carry them on their laps in a closed carriage to avoid damaging them against the roof.

The sentimental confusion of the time is well reflected in the "Bolivar" hat (named after the South American liberator) with its profusion of tartan ribbons (tartan being so romantic) and adorned with common field violets to show the wearer was a child of nature. This effort of millinery was worn in 1824, the year Byron died.

The Empress Josephine had such luxurious tastes in dress that she was never able to keep within her dress allowance of 60,000 francs, but was continually having to entreat Napoleon for grants from his private purse. After the divorce and her retreat to Malmaison she could never resign herself to retirement, and even on the very day of her death ordered her maid to dress her in an elegant rose-coloured gown in the hope that the Emperor of Russia might pay her a social call.

In the romantic thirties great ladies made use of wickerwork frames and feather cushions to widen the huge sleeves of their hour-glass dresses; and these sleeves took up so much material that it was usual to cut the bodice out of the scraps left over from the cutting out of the sleeves—a custom which was repeated in the eighteen-nineties when the leg-of-mutton sleeves used up much more material than the tight-fitting bodice.

Nature produces a certain percentage of large women at times when it is fashionable to be small and small women at other times when it is modish to be large. These out of step women are unfortunate. They are overlooked in the general admiration for what is right at the moment, and must resort to expedients to redress their natural deficiencies or surplus. The eighteen-nineties produced tall and heavily built women, who would nowadays be considered grossly overweight. W. S. Gilbert sings about



An English girl of eleven stone two  
And five foot ten in her dancing shoe.

Her dress exaggerated even that not inconsiderable size, with blouse enlarged by flounces and posterior swollen by petticoats and also hair well padded for amplitude.

"I love giants," confesses the artist Du Maurier in one of his novels. Trilby was such a giant.

The weight of clothing an English lady had to carry about with her at the end of the nineteenth century was enormous, but it was nothing compared to the monstrous burden of Elizabethan clothes made in several layers and of such heavy materials as stiff brocades and velvets, rendered still more weighty by being thickly embroidered with bullion and jewellery and tightly stuffed with bombast. The weight of the padded cloth, leather, and iron farthingale alone must have been overwhelming. Add to this the discomfort and extra weight of the ruff (for starch too has its weight) and the jewelled girdle with its trivia of fans and implements of all kinds. It was probably the heaviest dress ever worn in this country.

In contrast to this the average weight carried by a fashionable lady of 1800, including her slippers and all her jewellery, was less than eight ounces. The *Belle Assemblée* of 1812 remarks: "A very cold winter, but a woman habited in cloth is less feminine than if she were clothed in transparent gauze. White muslin is best of all. Leather quite cannaillish. Furs, cashmere shawls, destitute of every idea of easy elegance and dignity."

So flimsy and scanty was the fashionable dress that a Russian nobleman, visiting England for the festivities following the defeat of Napoleon, gave a modish lady money for alms at the entrance to a ball he was attending, under the impression that she was a poor beggar who could not afford more adequate garb.

The brief tube dress of 1927 weighed little more.

Students might seek an analogy between the Tudor ruff which isolated the head from the neck as effectively in appearance as did the executioner's axe in reality at that period of frantic beheadings—and the over-wide cravat which followed the French Revolution and swathed throat and chin like a gravecloth round the bloodied heads which fell into the basket of the guillotine.



At its height the average crinoline measured ten yards round the hem; since the hem was usually piped with rope or plaited straw to make it hang well, the weight was considerable. A tulle dress with four flounces (and that was a modest number for those days) required 1100 yards of material. Some crinolines had as many as twenty-five flounces. The Empress Eugénie had one white satin crinoline dress which had 103 tulle flounces and which it was only possible, because of the fragility of the material, to wear once.

The dress of 1875, with its bustle and tightly pulled-back skirt, was so tight that it was impossible for a fashionable lady to walk upstairs without assistance. The same predicament befell the wearers of the hobble skirt in 1914. Only by slitting the too-tight skirt a few inches at the sides (a gesture which aroused the ire of the clergy and was widely condemned as the height of indecency) was walking at all possible. This was the dress which imprisoned the women of Europe during the first year of the First World War.

The gimcrack seventies favoured such domestic adornments as draped dinner-bells, embroidered spittoons, fretwork whatnots made at home, and festoons of moss-green plush to cover the piano-lid. The artistic hung Japanese fans on distempered buff walls and stuck a peacock's feather in a blue and white Chinese pot. The patriotic bought chinaware with the Queen's portrait on every item, including the interior of the pot-de-chambre. Fashionable ladies decorated their hats with stuffed owls, chenille spiders, velvet mice, artificial snails, and toads made in plush.

This was the period when William Morris was earnestly making "better" furniture and better tapestries, better pictures and better curtain material, in his famous workshops. His triumph of the well-made and noble in conception appears to us to-day absolutely of its period and in the same class of gimcrack. His tables and chairs are rickety and awkward, and his designs fussy and over-ornamented. Only his poetry has stood the test even of so short a space of time.

The architecture of Philip Webb, who built the Red House for Morris, looks to us to-day similarly awkward—the windows too high and of the queerest proportions, the walls too tall, the mantel-

pieces too far up and falsely simple, the settles 'all wrong.' But perhaps the next generation but one will regard it as a delightful period piece and rejoice in what is to-day unacceptable.

The Gothic revival gave birth to imitation ruins, hastily built in the grounds of newly battlemented houses. A convert to the Gothic mode thought it proper to hire an unemployed gardener to remain silent for seven years and to sit in a newly built log cell in a remote part of the grounds dressed as a hermit, with nothing to do but brood and contemplate an hour-glass and nothing to sustain himself with but bread and water. After the first triumph had worn off the hermit went on strike for a daily ration of beer and brought the experiment to an abrupt end. But grottoes and fancy hermitages continued to be built. And the fashion for admiring ivy-covered ruined castles has continued to this day.

Ladies whose foreheads were adorned by a *ferronnière* pined away their days reading melancholy verses in mock Gothic rooms in mock Gothic houses in the intervals of eating nothing and attending fancy-dress balls dressed as Amy Robsart. Queen Victoria's new drawing-room at Balmoral, upholstered in all the different plaids, was regarded with general satisfaction as truly romantic.

The popularity of the novels of Sir Walter Scott and the fact that Lord Byron was descended from Scottish kings resulted in a passion for tartans, which in France never made any pretence of being authentic plaids, but were frankly inventions, and consequently infuriated Scottish people, who are incensed at even a true tartan being worn by those having no hereditary right to wear it.

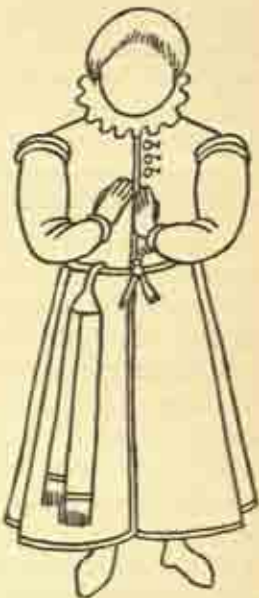
Mrs Bloomer disclaimed having invented the garment attributed to her. "Rational Dress," as it was derisively called when not mocked by less printable names, was, however, certainly American in origin. A New York lady wrote to the Press, "I adopted the Camille costume or Turkish dress now called 'bloomer' in 1849 and have always worn it at home and abroad ever since."

Countess Fritz Hohenau, leader of the Berlin smart set in 1895 and cousin to the Emperor, wore "very wide corduroy knickerbockers reaching below the knee where they joined black silk



stockings, patent leather boots, and leather leggings." Though this dress, which she wore for cycling, was hardly rational, it nevertheless pleased the Berlin police, who had been having much trouble because horses had previously shied at women's long black riding-skirts.

The labour entailed in making the frilly blouses and lingerie of the nineties was enormous, and often it was all done by hand. And it is essential, to give a true balance to the period, to mention the other side of the fashion. Rates of pay for making these elaborate blouses were 1d. per blouse in Hoxton, and 1½d. to 2d. for the most elaborate. One-third of all the tailoresses in London were under eighteen years of age, and the suggestion that women and children should not be allowed to work more than fifty-two hours a week, nor more than nine and a half hours a day, except on one day in the week, was bitterly opposed by the drapers on the grounds that it would ruin the trade. In 1894 the Shop Assistants Act had not yet been enacted.



ELIZABETHAN BOY—  
"PETER BEST,  
A YOUNG CHILD"

From the monumental brass  
in Merstham Church, Surrey.  
English, 1585.

One important aspect of fashion is the mutual borrowing of men from women and of women from men of certain garments. This is no new thing. In *The Boke of Curtasye*, written in the closing years of the fifteenth century, the author, Strutt, complains that English dress was exceedingly fantastical in so far as it was impossible to distinguish one sex from the other. The cotehardie was worn by both sexes equally.

In the sixteenth century Stubbes complained that "the women also have doublets buttoned up to the breste and made with winges



weltes and pinnions on the shoulder points as men's apparel is for all the world."

William Harrison declared that women were become as men and men transformed into monsters. The Elizabethan tall hat, wreathed with ribbon rosettes, was worn equally by men and women. Peascod-bellies and bombasted doublets and trunks gave men the appearance of pregnant women. This in the virile Tudor period. In France peascod-bellies were called "*panses*," a word which has survived in a corrupted form till to-day, and is used in modern England to mean a homosexual or effeminate man.

The very names of fashionable French Restoration colours have an artificiality rare even in this rarefied atmosphere. *Crapaud mort d'amour* was a light green; *crapaud saisi*, a slightly deeper green; *souris éffrayée*, a dull grey; and *araignée méditant un crime*, another grey. English gentlemen took at least as passionate an interest in them as did their wives. Lady Morgan in 1830 reported that the Paris dandy favoured trousers in a delicate shade called "*cuisse de nymphe*."

The seventeenth century was notable for the number of accessories borrowed by men from women's attire. The petticoat breeches were no less unmanly than the great periwig with its suggestion of a woman's long hair. Restoration beaux felt undressed without their fan in the summer and their muff in the winter. They wore higher-heeled shoes than their wives, more jewellery, and at least as much make-up. There were more frills on a gentleman's shirt in the eighteenth century than on the corresponding female garment. Indeed, the whole of the period when wigs were worn with close-shaved face and a froth of laces and ribbon under the chin was a period of effeminacy in men's clothes, hardly saved by the fact that women borrowed the cravat for themselves.

At the time of the French Revolution some ladies, assuming the *liberté des cultes* to mean they might do as they liked, chose to carry firearms about with them. Thérèse de Méricourt, for instance, strolled about Paris with a large sabre at her side, two pistols in her belt, and a *cravache* in her hand (the handle of which, however, was made of gold with a patent top which unscrewed and was filled with smelling-salts in case she should feel faint).

On the twenty-seventh Brumaire of the second year after the Revolution a group of heavily armed young women, in Phrygian caps, revolutionary jackets, and pantaloons, went in a body to offer their services to the Consul of the Commune, where they caused a tremendous sensation. The attendant Minister harangued them thus:

"Imprudent women! Why do you try to be men? What more do you want? You already dominate us. In the Courts the Magistrates are at your feet. Your tyranny is the only force against which we cannot prevail because it is the force of love and consequently the work of Nature. In the Name of Nature then remain what you are, and instead of envying the perils of a stormy life be content with enabling us to forget it in the bosom of our families in resting our eyes with the enchanting sight of our children made happy by your tender cares."

The rising feminist movement in England was immediately reflected in women's dress, which exactly copied the male straw boater, the cloth cap, and the stiff-collared, high-necked shirt. The severe daytime blouse, cut exactly like a man's shirt and worn with a severe tie, continued until 1914, and is still seen sometimes to-day in the street, worn by older ladies who grew up with the century and stick to the modes of their youth.

Feminists complained that men did not mind in the least that women should do drudgery work at sweated rates of pay or take burdensome responsibilities for which they received no credit, so long as they made no demand for equality of franchise or equal rates of pay for equal work. This last is a battle not yet won. The prejudice against women eating a square meal, though they may have done a harder day's work than their menfolk, continued steadily throughout the nineteenth century, and does it not in some measure still continue?

This must to some extent be blamed on Lord Byron, who, himself the victim of a highly disordered liver, which he further aggravated by excessive purging all his life in his efforts to keep down his unromantic tendency to put on fat, could not enjoy food, and, as we have said elsewhere, had a horror of seeing women eating. Women caught pneumonia and gave themselves the beginnings of consumption by wearing in cold weather



inadequate dresses of thin white muslin which were believed to "wrap them in elegant robes of light impalpable ether."

It was highly fashionable to be consumptive. Lady Byron's passion for mutton-chops alienated other people besides her husband. It was gross for women to eat at all.

In 1855 an American handbook on etiquette says: "Tea and toast is all ladies may eat nowadays. We do not expect a lady to eat beefsteak. The flesh of the hog finds its way to few fashionable tables. The most refined people dispense with the flesh of animals entirely from æsthetic, hygienic, and moral considerations." And he goes on to counsel ladies to restrict themselves to a pure farinaceous diet of rice and hominy, and at all costs to avoid embarrassing and repulsive dishes such as beans or onions.

At this time Mrs Livingstone, surely as modest and womanly a woman as the greatest purist could desire, was exploring the jungles of Africa with her husband and children.

Even as late as 1902 a gentleman editing a guidebook to social behaviour in England writes: "Some men are very fastidious about the appetites displayed by ladies and would have them reject the entrées and dine upon a thin slice of chicken or a spoonful of jelly."

How were they supposed to develop the ample frames and plenitude of flesh then admired as a fine figure? About this time, it might be recalled, Mary Kingsley in a bonnet and cape was travelling unescorted through parts of West Africa where no white man had dared venture.

*Vogue* reported in 1926: "The hosier's that was once a sanctum for the masculine shopper is now a battleground for women buying his scarves, sweaters, pyjamas, and cuff-links"—to wear, of course, for themselves in the fashionable effort to look boyish. This is the period of the sudden and short-lived but highly significant male craze for 'Oxford bags,' very pale in colour and so wide in the leg as to resemble two skirts joined at the top. The late Herbert Farjeon aptly nicknamed them "maternity trousers."

Shorts, jeans, trousers resembling ballet tights (due to French influence, which always succeeds in tightening even the most masculine styles so as to display the feminine figure more closely), are all popular women's wear for beach or 'play,' though the



play involved need be nothing more strenuous than lying on the sands at Cannes or playing bridge in a seaside hotel on the south coast of England.

Typists cycle to the country at week-ends in shorts no more ample than a loin-cloth and arouse no comment. And the youth of England eagerly copy American styles of beachwear in the shape of sarongs or shirts made in flowered material, like the loose covers of country-house arm-chairs.

## CHAPTER NINE

### UMBRELLAS, WALKING-STICKS, AND FANS

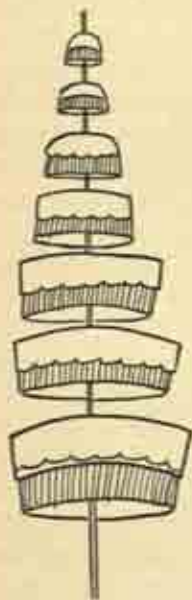
I've sticks and canes for young and old;  
To either are they handy  
In driving off a barking cur  
Or chastising a dandy.

*Stick-vendor's cry (1790)*

THE stick is a symbol of magic power, the umbrella of exalted status. Hermes traditionally bears a snake-wreathed rod for speed and magic invisibility. The present-day messengers of the House of Commons wear a badge of office in the form of a figure of Mercury suspended from their necks by a gilt chain. And in the popular ballet *Giselle*, so crammed with romantic and superstitious allusions, the Queen of the dread Wilis reveals her supernatural power by the use of two wands (the additional left-hand one boding evil).

Roman centurions in England bore a staff of vine-wood as their symbol of office, and the Roman standard-bearer was marked out by bearing a tall ornamental staff decorated like a totem-pole and pointed at the bottom end so that it could be set up on the ground.

The umbrella is of Oriental origin and was intended to be held over the heads of kings to indicate their power and importance. Ashanti chiefs, for instance, are still entitled to the use of such a ceremonial umbrella when they walk out, and Mahratta Princes of India were called by the honourable title of "Lord of the Umbrella."



EASTERN  
UMBRELLA

Ceremonial umbrella  
still used in Asia.

From this ceremonial umbrella, used in the East since the days of ancient Egypt, is derived the ceremonial canopy held by four bearers over royalty in the Middle Ages, used at English coronations, and still in use at traditional Jewish weddings, where it emphasizes the gravity of the occasion and of the vows undertaken. The canopy of thrones and pulpits has the same origin.

Among the Tshi people of West Africa a girl announces her eligibility for marriage by being escorted under an umbrella dressed in her best clothes and adorned with all her ornaments.

Greek ladies of the fifth century B.C. wore a pointed hat with an enormously wide brim to protect their complexions from the sun—parasols, in fact, in all but handle. It was a mode considered too effeminate for men. That it was popular in Roman times is revealed by the fresco in a recently excavated Roman villa in Sicily which depicts girls bathing in the sea dressed in what we to-day call 'bikinis' and carrying parasols.

Elegant youths in the Middle Ages liked to carry short canes on which they perched their sugar-loaf hats. Most municipal corporations to-day own a ceremonial mace which is derived from what was once a military mace used in the battles of the Middle Ages. The House of Commons has such a mace, and in it is invested such authority that sessions may not be begun until the mace is placed on the table. It is well known that Oliver Cromwell once halted the sitting which he could no longer countenance by seizing the mace with the ejaculation, "Take away this bauble."

The umbrella, which was intended as a protection against sun not rain and known as an 'Ombrelle,' was first brought to this country from Portugal in the trousseau of Catherine of Braganza. Charles II liked it no better than he did the rest of her trousseau. By 1688 there were several in use, very heavy and ungainly with clumsy thick handles. It was over a century before their possibilities for coquetry were discovered and explored. Michael Drayton wrote, describing doves:

And like umbrellas with their feathers  
Shield you in all sorts of weathers.

In 1708 Kersey's dictionary defined the umbrella as "a kind of broad fan or screen, commonly used by women to shelter them



from the sun." As with other words anglicized from the French (endive and chicory, for instance), the meanings have been reversed, and in modern France an umbrella is a *parapluie* and a parasol an *ombrelle*.

When coffee-houses became fashionable a large umbrella was kept by the door for the purpose of escorting clients from their carriage to the door of the coffee-house in wet weather (in the same way as many good restaurants do to-day).

This practice explains the caustic advertisement which appeared in 1709 in the *Female Tattler*: "The young gentleman that for fear of rain borrowed the umbrella at Hill's coffee-house in Cornhill is hereby advertised that to be dry from head to foot on the like occasion he shall be welcome to the maid's pattens."

Long wands have been for many centuries the badge of office of stewards and chamberlains. These are quite distinctive from personal walking-sticks, some of the most beautiful of which were fashioned in the eighteenth century. Much labour and expense was lavished on the knobs, which were often made of gold, clouded amber, fine porcelain, and rare jade.

When duelling was forbidden by law the sword-stick became popular. It contained, in an apparently harmless stick, a lethal rapier. The sword-stick was not only used for duelling, however, but also for protection on long journeys and against attack by robbers in the City streets.

Regency dandies carried a tasselled cane, the conduct of which was of the extremist importance and closely scrutinized as a sure test of breeding. At this period ladies' umbrellas began to be carried more often to augment the scant protection from showers or revealing sunlight afforded by the transparent dresses. At first these umbrellas were clumsy and too large for elegance. They also had to be carried upside-down, suspended from a ring at the bottom, the folds being held together by means of another ring. By 1808 these umbrellas and parasols (they were interchangeable, the *tout en cas* being used for both purposes) had long handles and were made of fringed silk.

Such an accessory as the parasol was bound to reflect the current *motif*, and in the thirties parasols were made in pagoda shapes or faithfully echoed the cupolas of the Brighton Pavilion. As ladies'

gowns grew wider and wider the size of the parasol correspondingly diminished, until with the fullest extension of the crinoline the accompanying parasol was no larger than a modest dinner-plate.

Parasols of the forties, fifties, and sixties were often of the utmost elegance and extremely costly, a special parasol to match each summer gown being required by ladies who cared to follow the elegant mode. They were usually jointed in the handle: a long handle would have been impossible to wear with the crinoline. This 'break' when the parasol was opened was held firm by a ring band (made of pure gold in the costliest parasols).



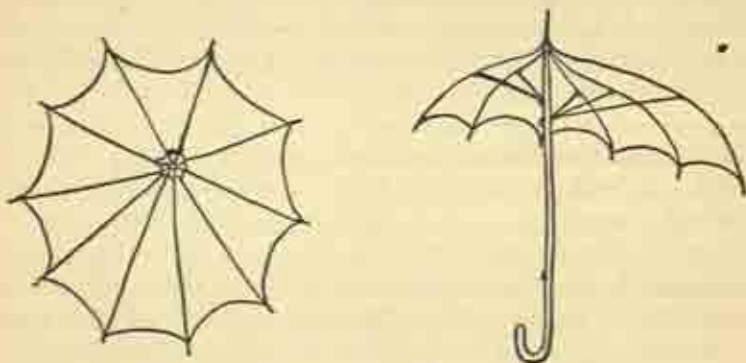
SUNSHADE HAT  
Greek, fifth century B.C.

Among the collection of parasols belonging to Mrs Langley Moore, which, by her courtesy, have been studied by the present writer, are parasols of fine silk and *point de Venise* lace, trimmed with silk fringe, and with handles of coral, gold, fine enamels, and the costliest porcelains. Some are made of black silk with elegant ebony handles for mourning wear. There is a combination 'parasol-fan' which was put on the market in 1850 under the name of "the Oriental fan parasol with psyche fringe" which could be either used as an ordinary parasol or opened out flat by tilting and used as a fan. Its vogue lasted for three years.

In the eighties parasols grew much larger, and some ladies took to carrying a stick with morning dress. It was in 1881 that the actress Sarah Bernhardt, playing in Paris in *La Dame aux Camélias*, carried a Japanese paper parasol which caught the public fancy so wildly (for the combination of artistic Japanese and cultured courtesan was irresistible) that for the next ten years every

woman carried a Japanese paper parasol and every cultured sitting-room fireplace was decorated with one. The umbrella-makers and parasol-makers were ruined and sent petitions to the Government to do something about it. But what could the Government do against a mode once it had been launched?

It was one of Dickens's characters who gave her name of Gamp to the large folding umbrella. It was a masculine umbrella and intended for poorer families. The father was supposed to hold it



PLAN AND SECTIONAL ELEVATION OF PATENT LOP-SIDED  
UMBRELLA SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR WEARING WITH BUSTLE

English, 1875-85.

over the heads of all his family at the same time—say, for church parade on wet Sundays. The folding umbrella had been invented, or rather introduced into this country, by Jonas Hanway, the traveller and philanthropist, as far back as 1778. He was heartily hooted and jeered at for his pains, for the London mob took violently against men carrying umbrellas at all. Sedan-chairmen hated them because they were bad for business, and the great Dr Johnson also contributed the weight of his displeasure against the new-fangled and unmanly umbrella. He was already prejudiced against the unfortunate Mr Hanway, who had been rash enough to denounce tea-drinking.

Nineteenth-century umbrellas for men were often made with fantastic handles, not surprising perhaps in an age which produced



Lear and Lewis Carroll; guomes, tree-trunks, the tree of life, etc., were all popular, and every variety of exotic wood from remote corners of the world was eagerly pressed into service. French umbrella-handles were less grotesque, often displaying an elegantly carved female head. In exile at Caen in 1830, it may be worth recalling, Beau Brummell took to carrying an umbrella (for he had a feline horror of rain); it was made of silk, with an ivory handle carved into a decidedly unflattering portrait of George IV.

Ladies' parasols of the eighteen-nineties repeat the seductive formula, of plain exterior and sumptuously frilly interior, employed for the dress of the period. One such parasol in the collection of Mrs Langley Moore is carried out in scarlet silk lined with two tiers of black and gold lace, trimmed with large silk bows, and has a handle of beautiful Worcester porcelain.

It was a rich lady who owned a parasol of cream lace over silk, bordered by a heavy overhanging flounce, exactly like the bloused top of the 1898 gown it accompanied; and when the same lady went into half-mourning in 1912 her grief was alleviated no doubt by a gorgeous black georgette parasol lined with cream Chantilly lace flounces and having a carved ivory handle.

The business-woman of 1910 carried a more practical umbrella, such as the one of green silk with a green wooden handle shaped in the form of a flamingo's head.

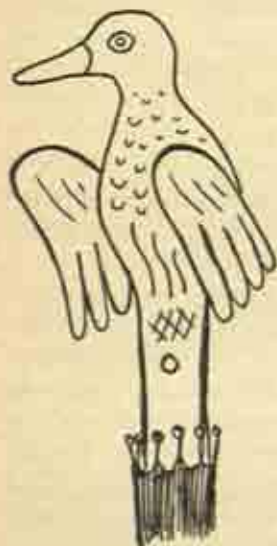
These parasols and umbrellas from the eighties until 1914 were all distinctly large, as became the dresses and fashionably heavy woman favoured by the prevailing mode. But the bright young thing of the mid-nineteen twenties was small and slight, so that a new kind of umbrella was designed for her, the 'dumpy,' small enough when telescoped to fit comfortably into a handbag—a functional umbrella, in fact. The dumpy is still sold to-day in popular haberdashers, though fashionable ladies have reverted to taller and more elegant umbrellas with crooked handles, or else favour even smaller folding umbrellas which can be accommodated in an overcoat pocket and open with Heath Robinson ingenuity into a full-sized one.

But not the most fashionable ladies, whose status demands the protection of a private car for the smallest journey in wet weather, and who would regard it as humiliating to own an umbrella at all.

Parasols went out of fashion when sun-tan came in; and when the present Queen-mother visited New York with the late King George VI before the Second World War her elegant parasol caused much amazement, for no such thing had been seen there for at least a generation.

To-day umbrellas for men form part of the uniform of well-to-do male dress. They are not intended to be unfurled, but are carried like a walking-stick in the City, to accompany the formal bowler hat, leather gloves, and black coat regarded as suitable wear even on the hottest day. It may be recalled that when Mr

Chamberlain, the then Prime Minister, flew to Berchtesgaden in 1938 to attempt a peace pact with Hitler he carried with him a neatly rolled black umbrella. There was never any question as to whether he was likely to need such a thing in an air-flight, at the end of which he was to be met by a car, but it was part of his uniform as an English City gentleman, and he could not travel without it.



UMBRELLA HEAD

Carved and painted wood with mechanically animated wings. Austria, 1920.

The jester's bauble usually took the form of a stick or staff, symbol of his licence to mock at what other men dared not. An Italian example has survived from 1500. It is carved in box-wood with elaborately worked incidents from the life of the Virgin intertwined with garlands of flowers and fruit.

Beau Nash, in his years of authority as Master of Ceremonies at Bath, made use of a long white staff of office. A practical staff was the long curved shoulder-staff, not unlike a yoke, which travelling hucksters used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and from which they suspended their parcels of goods.



Travelling carpenters carried their tools about with them inside the handle of their walking-sticks, which also contained the chuck for mounting them, so that the stick itself also served as a tool. Other walking-sticks contained travellers' samples of grain, match-box and candles, even drinks and measures.

Another variety of trade-stick was the horse-dealer's bamboo walking-stick, which contained a rule divided into 'hands' for measuring horses. English churches in the eighteenth century employed a 'dog-whipper,' an official armed with a long staff, whose duty it was to evict from the church any stray dogs which happened to wander in during the service. The stick was also used to administer a sharp tap to such parishioners as fell asleep during the sermon.

Walking-sticks of fine quality dated earlier than 1775 usually belonged to women, to fops, or to infirm old people—men of quality being too proud to carry anything other than swords. Fops, however, delighted in elegant canes, and these were made to their measure with expensive heads of such precious material as clouded amber. It was the highest fashion to suspend such a cane by a blue ribbon from the third button of the coat.

After 1775, owing to the law against duelling, as we have said, swords became less frequently seen in public, and the sword-stick took its place. The frequency with which gentlemen had practised duelling was the reason, of course, why it was outlawed. The combination of too much alcohol and a sharp weapon so ready to hand had been the cause of endless needless deaths before then. Nor did the custom die out at once.

The green carpet stretching between the seats of Government front bench and Opposition in the House of Commons carries a red line carefully spaced on each side to-day, as it has done for several hundred years, to place the opponents just out of sword's reach of one another. When an M.P. is speaking it is out of order for him to step beyond the red line on his own side.

The great nobles of France, who were too proud to fight with anyone of less noble blood than themselves, did not think it unmanly to employ servants to fight for them. Thus the famous incident of Voltaire and the Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot, who had been worsted by him in an encounter of wits. Soon after this



incident Voltaire happened to be dining at the house of the Duc de Sully when he was called outside and went unarmed to see what was the matter. There the Chevalier had his lacqueys waiting armed with heavy cudgels which they showered down



PARASOL OF SCARLET SILK LINED  
WITH TWO TIERS OF BLACK AND  
GOLD LACE, AND WITH HANDLE  
OF WORCESTER PORCELAIN

This parasol echoed the frilled petticoat motif of the prevailing fashion. From Mrs Langley Moore's collection. English, 1890.

upon Voltaire, the Chevalier himself directing the blows. The sequence, when the wounded playwright rushed back into the Duc de Sully's house and appealed in vain for help against his cowardly enemy, is a matter of history. None of his wealthy and noble friends dared offend the influential Chevalier by coming to Voltaire's aid.

Voltaire, though physically feeble and in indifferent health, then took lessons in fencing from the best swordsman in Paris in order to avenge the insult offered him, but the Chevalier was powerful enough to have Voltaire flung into the Bastille, and he was not allowed to leave his prison except to go

straight into exile. Not surprisingly this experience, acting like vitriol upon such a sensitive and eloquent personality, turned Voltaire's thoughts away from the glittering and cynical noble French society where he had sparkled, to the contemplation of its crying injustices, and must count as a factor in the French Revolution he did not live to see, probably would have hated

if he had, but to which he contributed powerfully by his writings.

Fans are a natural development of the broad leaf used by children and primitive people to keep away flies and stir the sultry air on hot days. They were introduced into the Western world from the East via Italy. By the reign of Queen Elizabeth I they were already a fashionable article of dress, and were both carried by Court gentlemen and worn by ladies suspended from a ribbon from the girdle along with a pomander and a variety of other objects.

Elizabethan fans resembled a battledore in shape and were ornamented with long curled feathers, ostrich being especially admired. The inventory of the Queen's effects lists twenty-seven fans, one of which was made of red and white feathers with a gold handle inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ivory. It was a present given to her by Francis Drake.

The traveller Thomas Coryate wrote in 1611 from Italy that there pictorial fans of pleasing design were sold in the streets for popular use and, though of sturdy quality, cost no more than a groat.

Folding fans date from the middle of the seventeenth century and were as much employed by men as by women. In the designs with which these were adorned, the fan-shape was treated like any other surface, and the picture was painted on it without regard to the lines of the folds, so that even the costliest fans, painted by such masters as Fragonard and Watteau, frequently have the faces painted on them broken in folding. These fans were usually painted on paper or fine vellum (called chicken-skin) and designed in complimentary terms to the patron ordering them. A fan painted for Maria-Theresa, wife of Louis XIV, has Cupids floating above the royal couple, with branches of olive and palm, while other cherubs coyly prepare the nuptial couch.

Once fans began to be collected forgers got to work, and there are more fans attributed to Watteau and Fragonard than these masters could possibly have painted even had they lived much longer than they did and done nothing else than paint fans all their lives.

Allegorical themes and religious themes—such as the finding of

Moses in the bullrushes, or the feast of Belshazzar—were typical of the fans painted in the late Louis XIV period, all the figures being painted in flowing pseudo-classical robes. The reign of the fifteenth Louis brought in smaller fans, painted on silk and brightened with sequins, with rich sticks of gold, ivory, and mother-of-pearl. The favourite theme was pastoral idylls and *scènes galantes*, inspired and frequently copied directly from Watteau, and often mixing different portions of different paintings.

The making of a fan was a work of co-operation, several craftsmen, apart from the artist himself, working on one fan. The gilder, the ivory carver, the colourist, the mounter, the stick-maker, were all needed, each being a specialist unable to tackle any other portion of the fan than his own limited job.

In England at this period fans often displayed blue and white medallions of the kind popularized by Wedgwood. Royal betrothals and baptisms continued to be the preferred theme, but very gradually scenes from everyday life began to creep in—that is to say, scenes from everyday noble life. Elegants were depicted doing nothing with the greatest pomp and ceremony. French fans found a popular theme in the hated Duke of Marlborough, many illustrating verse by verse the popular anti-British song "*Malbrouk s'en va-t'en guerre*." In 1778 a fan was printed in Paris celebrating in the form of a satire the separation of America from England.

The ascent at the King's command of the balloon at Versailles in 1783, watched by the entire Court, was at once introduced into the new fans. There are at least ten different versions of popular balloon ascents at this time. The French easily held the field in fan-making, and not only were French fans exported to other countries, but so also were French fan-makers.

So popular had fans become that by 1710 there were about 300 different fan-makers in London, many of whom had learned from French fan-makers settled in London, enrolled in the Fan-makers Company. Both hand-painted and printed fans commanded a ready sale, and were bought in such numbers that a tax on fans in the year 1751 produced the sum of £30,000. It was usual to wear a printed fan with morning toilet and a hand-painted fan for the



evening (in the same way that paste jewels were considered proper wear for morning and real jewels by night).

Angelica Kauffmann designed fans painted on leather, sometimes opening with a tassel, and it was she who painted a special fan in honour of Alexander Pope. Italy experimented with fans of cut vellum or mica giving a lace-like effect, and it was the custom for youths making the Grand Tour to bring back fans specially painted for them, with views of the frescoes of Pompei or of Vesuvius in eruption.

In England printed fans had to carry the publisher's imprint and date of publication, for they were a common form of publication which easily lent themselves to revolutionary sentiments or obscenities (the latter less worrying than the former). Dance fans, which printed the steps and music of new dances, came into fashion in 1797. There was also 'fanology,' which enabled two people to carry on a conversation with each other in secret by means of an elaborate secret fan code. "This fan," it was advertised, "improves the friendship and acts forth a plan to chit-chat and hold the tongue."

There were several kinds of theatrical fans, some showing scenes from popular plays—others with elaborate mounts in the form of sea-serpents, displaying a plan of the theatre with the names of noble box-holders, so that the pit might identify the celebrities. Much as to-day (save that now we relate it afterwards) the glossy Press describes who went to such and such a performance. There were fortune-telling fans, and fans which printed popular ballads. One fan, on the death of George II, shows Britannia weeping, with a satiric poem by Walpole. George III was more popular, and upon his recovery from insanity in 1789 a straightforwardly patriotic fan was printed with a rose and thistle and intertwined scarves bearing the words, "Health is restored to ONE and happiness to millions." These printers of fans for the multitude had to gauge the current public sentiments very closely or suffer a bad slump in sales, for such fans had to sell the moment the news was warm or lose topicality. They form therefore an interesting study of real public opinion which by no means always coincides with the official version.

Fans were printed to celebrate Nelson's sea victories, and a fan

about the Peninsular War was printed in England for the Spanish market. Fans followed the course of the struggle against Napoleon, exactly as if they were newspapers, by giving printed lists of French and English ships in various engagements, with details of captures and sinkings. One fan combines such a topical casualty list with the music and steps of eighteen new country dances. This fan perhaps was already half printed, and the news of the naval battle added like stop-press news.

Scenes from Hogarth's paintings were copied successfully on to fans—in particular the *Rake's Progress*, of which somehow it was contrived to include all the scenes on one fan. There were fans with the History of England, botanical-lesson fans, and a map fan intended for the use of girls during pauses in dancing lessons in their seminaries, so that they might usefully study without wasting a moment. Special fans for church were printed with psalms from as early as 1732.

The French Revolution put a halt to the luxury trade in fans (which had become more and more concerned with amorous dalliance), but did not stop the industry, for cheap fans were published and commanded a ready sale, printing each incident in the course of the Revolution like a newspaper. These series, of great interest to social historians, begin with the birth of the Dauphin, described as "le dauphin présenté par l'immortalité: La France saisi d'admiration offre pour hommage à son prince chéri les cœurs unis de ses respectueuses et fideles sujets," and proceed fan by fan through the *assemblée* of notables in 1788, the Necker fan, the *états généraux*, the series of fans about the taking of the Bastille. Then come the fans of the *Liberté-égalité-fraternité* era, the fan commemorating the Fête de l'Être Suprême after several others showing the Triumph of the Goddess of Reason and the patriotic citizens dancing round the Tree of Liberty.

All these fans are etched and hand-coloured, and mounted on the cheapest kind of wooden sticks. Over a century later the hurried pictorial window-posters developed by the poet Mayakowsky at the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917 performed a similar function as newspapers for largely illiterate people.

The Royalists were also catered for. Fans were painted with portraits of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, and the words



"*lâche qui t'abandonne*." These fans, intended for a different market, were beautifully decorated with glittering sequins and were much more expensive. As the situation worsened Royalist fans grew more cautious. A seemingly innocently sentimental fan entitled "*Le Songe*" portrays a sleeping woman dreaming over a tomb, and the dream, which is a portrait of the King, has a piece of paper pasted over it so that it can only be seen by being held up to the light by those in the secret.

The Royalists did not give up trying to arouse sympathy for their cause by means of fans, and after the execution of the King and Queen of France there was a considerable secret market in spangled gauze fans, which when folded in a particular way revealed the fleur-de-lis or portraits of the royal pair with the words "*Vive le Roi*." These fans were expensive, costing about 200 livres each, perhaps because their makers had to be compensated for such a dangerous occupation. They aroused the fury of every Republican journal.

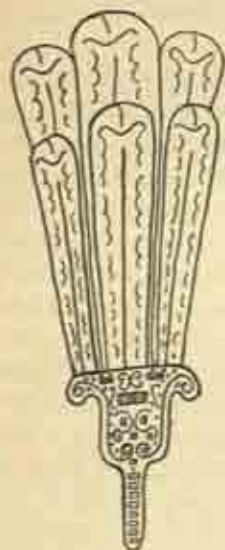
At least a thousand different fans were printed to celebrate Napoleon, and not only in France, but all over the world. It is extraordinary how far his legend spread at this time. (A statue of Napoleon has even been found in a forgotten temple deep in the interior of China where, as far as was known, no European had ever been.)

The fans at Napoleon's Court were very expensive, but lacked the delicacy of the fans at the Court of Versailles, much skill having been dispersed during the Revolution. In 1800, the time of the greatest transparency in women's dress, transparent fans to match alternated with fans of heavy feathers intended for concealment. There were also quizzing fans, containing a magnifying-glass for the purpose of watching bathers. In England at this time the only proper wear for church was a church fan. But many women were not to be stopped from taking frivolous fans to church by the rebukes of the parson. Thus the editress of the *Female Reformer* wrote in 1776 that she "is really ashamed to see naked cupids and women almost so completing the shameful group on a fan seen in a dissenting place of worship." This moral lady seems to have taken the trouble to have a good look.

Mourning fans commanded a steady sale, for mourning was a



lengthy affair complicated by many rules as to exactly what might and what might not be worn. A black fan, trimmed with jet and with an ebony handle, was proper in the first months of grief, and at the later stages of mourning a perfectly plain fan, without print or colour, was permissible. Weeping females, willows, urns, and distant views of Windsor Castle were also regarded as suitably funereal wear for near relatives.



FAN USED BY  
QUEEN ELIZABETH I  
OF ENGLAND

It has six ostrich feathers  
and a jewelled handle.  
About 1600.

In France there was an old custom at weddings for the bride to give lady guests a fan each for a souvenir. At noble or royal weddings these fans were of great value and sometimes took the form of paintings depicting the bride and bridegroom as celestial gods and goddesses.

*Brisé* fans were made entirely of filigree, tortoiseshell, or ivory finely incised to look like lace. They date from the middle of the eighteenth century, and at first were very small. At the same period the rage for cabriolets gave rise to cabriolet fans painted on ivory or vellum. Mystery fans also date from the eighteenth century, wherein two or four pictures could be revealed by cunning adjustments in the folding of a fan. Again, the colour might be innocently changed from blue to green, or less innocently an apparently harmless picture when the fan was fully opened could be changed into a very coarse one by a

variation in the folding, or by opening the fan from left to right instead of right to left. This seems almost like a forerunner of our present-day vulgar British picture-postcards which have such a fascination for foreign visitors to these shores.

The Gothic Revival is faithfully reflected in fans of that period which frequently have their edges cut into the shape of battle-

ments. Another quizzing fan had an inset of mica or gauze, so that a lady might cunningly use her fan as a lorgnette while her face appeared to be screened from view. This type of fan was intended for use at a risqué play, when modesty required some equivalent to the earlier face-mask. Still another kind of theatre fan had a fancy border of large open circles, one of which contained a magnifying-glass which could be used in place of an opera-glass.

Expanding fans were made from 1800 to 1850, with detachable or folding handles to save room in reticules—for there were no pockets to put them in. Before the invention of reticules ladies had been obliged to thrust their fans into their bosoms, or risk stabbing themselves in the face by spearing them through the ribbon tied below the breasts.

Costly fans were kept in a special case of their own, being rightly regarded as jewels worthy of a proper setting. These fan-cases called for a special class of craftsmen called *gagniers* whose sole job was to make fan-cases. Costly fan-sticks—and many were made of carved ivory, gold, or tortoiseshell—were kept when the mount wore out and had a new fan grafted on. Some of the fans in collections are thus not the original mounts and sticks combined, but the sticks have had various previous mounts.

The correct management of the fan occupied much attention in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Addison jokingly proposed to set up a fan academy for both sexes where the art of fan management could be taught. "Women," he wrote, "are armed with fans as with swords." Even a plain woman, at this period when aristocratic grace and genteel behaviour could go far to offset other deficiencies, could achieve distinction by means of the skilled management of her fan, for it was firmly believed that no plebeian could learn the art.

Queen Charlotte, who was no beauty, had her portrait painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who later commented, "Lord, how she used that fan!"

The nineteenth century gave rise to many sentimental mother-and-child fans; romantic fans of parting lovers; ruins by moonlight; Cupid weeping at the feet of Poesie; and not a few comic fans, such as an early bicycle fan and the Paris Omnibus Gondolas

(about the new Seine steam-boats). There were also the fans of occasion—such as the Nicaragua Canal Fan, depicting the King of Spain earnestly listening to the voice of Fame in the form of a plump nymph urging him on to complete the project.

Peacock-feather fans marked the æsthetic movement, and fans of ostrich feathers marked the turn of the century. In 1926 a new kind of fan was the single ostrich feather worn with the extremely short beaded evening-dress of the period.

Will there be a revival of fans? They look so appropriate with the 1953 crinoline evening gowns that ladies who choose to take a Victorian fan to a ball do not look anachronistic, though a century stretches between the dress and the fan.

Men have employed fans since the time of the Pharaohs, and fans were carried by fashionable men until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Tutankhamen had many fans, one of which, semicircular in shape, was made of beaten gold plumed with ostrich feathers, forty-two feathers in all, of white and brown. The carving on this fan shows him engaged in an ostrich hunt. Others of his fans had silver and ivory mounts set with gold or blue glass.

The fashion for male fans reached England from Italy via France at the end of the sixteenth century. Green, writing in 1617 of the fashionable fop of his time, said, "We strive to be accounted womanish by keeping of beauty, by curling of hair, by plumes of feathers in our hands."

Aubrey in 1678 mentioned that "gentlemen had prodigious fans, their handles at least half a yard long." Such was the fan commonly used by the Earl of Manchester. King Henry III of France, who was frankly effeminate and liked to wear pearl necklaces at Court, carried a cut-vellum folding fan large enough to be used as a parasol as well. Louis XV regarded the fan as an essential part of his Court dress and encouraged the pastime of *découpage* among his courtiers.

A political fan for men to carry was produced at the time of the Fronde in Paris; it was made of straw to express loyalty to the King and hatred for Mazarin.

*Brisé* ivory fan-sticks had to be carved and cut under warm



water, a delicate technique first perfected in Peking. Such *brisé* fans were carried by courtiers of Charles II. Addison's mock 'fan academy' proposed to teach "young gentlemen the whole art of gallanting a fan, according to the most fashionable airs and motions that are now practised at Court."

When Beau Nash put a stop to the wearing of swords at Assemblies in Bath, beaux like Lord Chesterfield and Lord Hervey took to carrying fans instead. Such was Lord Hervey's addiction to fans that he was popularly known as "Lord Fanny." Walpole often gave presents of fans and muffs to his male friends.

Macaronis carried either a muff or a fan according to the season and the weather. The Prince Regent, who aspired to be a dandy though excessively corpulent, was fond of fans and preferred French ones to English, though the import of French fans had in his time been made illegal in an effort to protect the English fan industry. There was, however, a lively trade in smuggled fans.

In 1744 the Queen of Sweden instituted the Order of the Fan, which gentlemen presently also joined. The Empress Catherine of Russia was so intrigued by this elegance that she commanded her male courtiers to wear fans also, though fans had previously been regarded as too effeminate for the Russian Court.

Debucourt's picture, *Promenade Publique*, dated 1792, shows a gentleman in the foreground with a large fan. At Napoleon's Court gentlemen carried fans of extravagant *peau d'âne* with ten-inch sticks upon which they wrote the names of their partners.

An observer of the effeminate young men of the time wrote:

They have small round looking-glasses with mother-of-pearl handles, before which they clean their teeth, curl their hair, blacken their eyebrows, trim their whiskers, and adjust their cravates. They are not ashamed to show themselves in public promenades and the theatre with large vellum fans which they extract from a pocket on the right side of their trousers.

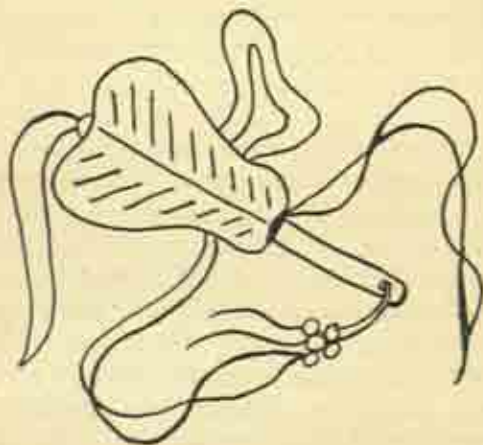
All Spanish cavaliers carried fans, and Disraeli reported that Spanish soldiers refused to mount guard without a fan.

At Queen Victoria's Court the elaborate male fan went out, and her gentlemen courtiers used instead the "British gentle-

man's fan," a folding fan in the form of a cockade which opened with two handles into a complete circle, rather like the Christmas paper novelty.

For Iroquois Indians the fan was an exclusively male article of dress. They made their fans out of wild-turkey feathers or the tail-feathers of crows, laced together with aromatic grass which gave out a sweet scent when the fan was agitated.

Chinese gentlemen, whose robes contain no pocket, keep their fans at the back of their necks, hidden in folds of their gowns, or else concealed in their boots. It has always been an essential part of dress for every class. Will it remain so in the New China?



TAOIST CHINESE FAN

The symbol of Chung Li-chūan, who is said to revive the souls of the dead by its aid.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CHILDREN AND THEIR CLOTHES

A 14-year-old boy was troublesome. He was given a good hiding at home. Then his mother was warned by an N.S.P.C.C. inspector, "Do not strike him." Afterwards, said the boy's mother at Ipswich Juvenile Court yesterday, two psychiatrists told her to "give the boy everything he wants, ice-cream and everything." Said the mother, "That did not work, either." For the boy took £2 out of his mother's hand-bag and spent it on, amongst other things, ice-cream.

The Magistrate asked him, "Aren't you ashamed?" "No," said the boy.

He was sent to an approved school.

*Daily Express* (December 1952)

THE idea that children should wear clothes suited to their years and loose enough to permit free movement is something new in world history, merely a century and a half old, since which time there have been frequent back-slidings. And this century and a half applies only to the Western world, and more particularly to England.

In all ages and all countries children have been dressed exactly the same as their parents. They have worn wigs, hoops, peascod-bellies, corsets, bustles, codpieces, swords. They have been bombasted and painted, tight-laced and plucked, according to the prevailing fashion. In pictures painted before 1780 or so, children resemble dwarfed adults. Sometimes one cannot be sure, except by a careful verification of the dates, that these pictures are really meant to represent children at all.

Not only have children been dressed like adults, but they have also been treated like adults. It is quite a new idea (and one which rarely prevails elsewhere than in England, and by no means in all classes of society even in England) that children require a different régime from adults. The parents of France, Italy, America, and most other countries, for instance, often allow even



the youngest children to stay up as late as they do themselves—except in those families wealthy and fashionable enough to employ a British nannie.

Continental and American people seem convinced that the pleasures of life are adult pleasures, and so they rarely have the



CHILD OF TWO YEARS BELONGING  
TO A RICH FAMILY  
European, 1613.

heart to deny their children the joys of grown-up entertainments, rich food, and late hours. English people, profoundly adolescent in many ways, regard the happiest years of life as those of childhood and seek by all means to prolong them—by playing games all their lives, preferring animals to humans, forming themselves into old-school-tie clubs, and so on. If any reader doubts this let him stroll towards the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens any Sunday morning, where he will find almost all the available space round the water's edge is occupied by middle-aged and elderly gentlemen sailing their model boats—so that there

is hardly any room for those children who wish to do the same.

In the economics of the Middle Ages, as in rural districts of Southern Ireland to-day, children were a mere pawn in the acquisition and consolidation of property, marriages being arranged to cement such arrangements. The poorest youths and girls among the English peasants fared better, in that there being no wealth or land to complicate matters they might to some

extent choose their own mates, always providing the choice did not meet with parental disapproval.

There seems to have been little time to play, whatever social status the children came from. Childhood was only an irritating interval before maturity, which was hurried on fast because people died younger. The children of the nobility had to study and learn to govern from an early age; the children of the poor to learn the hard tasks of the serf obliged to work for his lord without pay besides maintaining himself and his family from a small patch of land.

There was very high infant mortality, worse among the peasants, but also high among the rich. The same Christian name was bestowed on a succession of infants until at last one lived to bear it. Babies were baptized as soon as born, for if they died without baptism no funeral service was permitted, nor could bells be tolled. And then the departed small soul had no chance. In the eighteenth century there was still a very high infant mortality rate. Sunshine and fresh air were considered equally dangerous for babies. If the mother could not breast-feed her baby, nor a suitable wet-nurse be found (and many wet-nurses were gin-drinkers and could not be relied on not to give the baby similar potions), the baby was fed on sops of flour and milk, sucked off the finger of a glove, a perfect breeding-ground for germs, as it was rarely washed. Or else an attempt was made to feed the child with rice-flour mixed with asses' milk. Not surprisingly most of such babies died.

There seems to have been a deep-seated distrust of wet-nurses. Mrs Beeton, over a hundred years later, remarks:

Unless she is a woman of principle the child may suffer by her selfish indulgences in some favourite but forbidden article of diet such as pickles or her secret use of narcotics to secure a quiet night. The conscientiousness and good faith that would prevent a nurse so acting are unfortunately very rare, and many nurses rather than forgo the enjoyment of a favourite dish, though morally certain of the effect it will have on the child, feed with avidity on fried meats, cabbage, cucumbers, pickles, and other crude and injurious aliments in defiance of all orders given or confidence reposed in their word, good sense, and humanity.

Mrs Beeton recommends that when this dereliction does occur, and the infant duly screams and plunges all night in consequence, the dose of medicine should be administered not to the child but to the wet-nurse, to teach her better.

The diet of the wet-nurse, she urges, must be carefully superintended, and should consist chiefly of boiled meat, bread, potatoes with rice or sago pudding. No green vegetables, which she insists are very bad for the health at this time. No fresh fish either, or as little as possible, "but it is hardly sufficiently nutritious to be often used as a meal."

Children in the eighteenth century were less regarded as vessels of sin than they were in the seventeenth century, though John Wesley preached that children were born wicked and must be driven to grace by constant beatings. His own mother had always striven to conquer the will of her children and had brought him up "to fear the rod and cry softly."

Schools, governesses, and tutors all looked upon calligraphy as one of the most important accomplishments. It was taught like dancing or music by a visiting writing-master. The highly learned Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (she had studied by stealth and was a feminist before her time) drew up, after much reflection, a course of instruction for her grand-daughter in 1753. It included English literature, Latin, Greek, mathematics, and modern languages. But she wrote a worried letter a few days later, fearing such a syllabus might be thought shocking. Anxious for women to have education, she knew that it was likely to be socially disastrous, and once bitterly counselled her daughter to "hide your learning as you would a physical defect."

The daughters of good-class families went to genteel seminaries, where they were taught deportment first of all—deportment preceding all other studies as the most important—and such elegant arts as painting on glass, shell-work, wax-work, lace-making, and mould-work. In addition to these accomplishments, dancing and such musical instruments as the harp, which displayed the figure to graceful advantage. Jane Austen had a poor opinion of such schools, "where young ladies for enormous pay might be screwed out of health and into vanity."

England was still periodically swept by epidemics. Smallpox,



though common, was almost as dangerous as the bubonic plague, and took a heavy toll of the population. When Lady Mary Wortley Montagu made herself responsible for introducing into England the practice of inoculation against smallpox (she had seen it successfully practised in Turkey, where her husband was the English Ambassador), she aroused enormous opposition, though she had her own son and daughter first inoculated as an example. This early method left no scars and was in point of fact too mild a dose to be of much use. When Jenner followed this up with the perfecting of vaccination he was accused of blasphemy. Cartoons were published of children growing cow's heads and horns, and one doctor swore that a child who had been vaccinated in Clapham ran about on all fours.

Though vaccination has in our present day practically succeeded in wiping out smallpox in England, no British Government dare make it compulsory, for there are always some people who object to the practice. Old ideas die hard—if, indeed, they ever do die.

The theories of Rousseau played a leading part in the new and more sentimental approach to children towards the end of the eighteenth century. Children were looked upon with indulgence and began to be dressed in looser, easier garments. This new attitude developed until they wore the minimum of clothing. Boys ran about in a simple jacket and pantaloons tied perhaps with a soft sash—that is, the sons of well-to-do parents, for the sons of peasants still wore their usual breeches—and girls were dressed in the greatest possible freedom in a light muslin gown, open at the bosom, sleeveless or with sleeves so short as hardly to count, and tied simply at the bosom with a ribbon. Delightful in the summer and most fetching for a portrait, but an invitation to pneumonia in January. However, the little girls' mothers dressed just as diaphanously. It may be recalled that Annabella Milbanke when she married Lord Byron in the depths of winter wore a transparent white muslin dress and drove off through the snow on her honeymoon with the addition only of a thin slate-coloured satin pelisse. Byron wrote the usual sentimental verses of his time about children, whom in the abstract he could admire as well as anybody else. But he found his own new-born daughter unendurable.

"Sucks and squalls incessantly," he wrote in a frenzy of irritation. It is true he had wanted a son.

These light, loose children's chemise-frocks of 1800 look attractive wear to our eyes to-day. But they appeared dreadful in 1890, when the styles both of dressing children and bringing them up had radically changed. "At no period," wrote an authority on

costume in 1890, "were styles so offensive and devoid of a single line of elegance as in 1800, with horrible low shoes fastening with but a single strap." Simplicity in children's wear was thought vulgar to a generation for which high buttoned boots and a lot of underwear were *de rigueur* for children of both sexes. The bare arms and hatless heads of 1800 were considered tasteless and shameful, though the author warns that the fashions of her own day had their drawbacks, mentioning in passing that "diseases of the brain can sometimes be traced back to heavy headgear."



MUMMY-CASE OF CHILD

Akhmin Roman-Egypt,  
after 30 B.C.  
British Museum

The ancient Egyptians, who prided themselves on the good manners of their children, had a proverb, "The ears of a child are on his back. He hears when he is beaten." Their children went to boarding-schools, to which the mothers daily brought the child's rations of bread and beer. The ancient Greeks dressed their children in long

himations, weighted to hang better, and the careful adjustment of the folds of which formed their earliest lessons in deportment. Only for athletics was the dress shortened. And Spartan girls ran their races naked.

Parents of the Middle Ages—and, indeed, later, as at all periods and as in all places where medical knowledge is scanty and uncertain—tried to protect their children by hanging magic or holy



amulets round their necks. Red Indian children, similarly, used to have their moccasins decorated with magic symbols to protect them against snake-bite, and the children of the Maya tribes were painted blue for protection against the evil eye. In India and in Arab countries it is still thought dangerous to praise a child, lest evil spirits be jealously attracted. African children have a series of different names wherewith to cheat malevolent spirits. And until less than a century ago boys in Europe and America have been dressed as girls until six or seven years of age for the same reason.

But though they were guarded against harm by magic amulets in the Middle Ages, these babies, as soon as they grew up a little, were treated as responsible for their actions, at an age when we to-day would not think them old enough to be so trusted. For instance, no one appears to have tried to prevent the children's crusades—even after the first disastrous effort, which was led by the shepherd lad Stephen in 1212 and resulted in the wholesale kidnapping of the thousands of girls and boys who took part in it when they reached Marseilles, whence they were sold into slavery in Egypt.

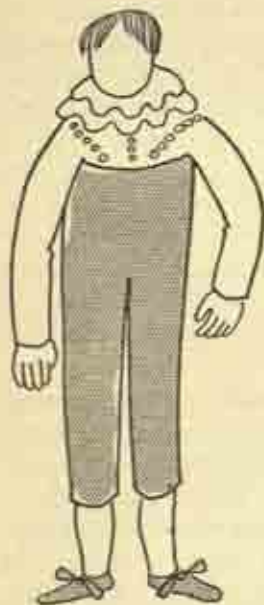
Far from discouraging so futile a sacrifice, Pope Innocent remarked approvingly, "The very children put us to shame. While we sleep, they go forth gladly to conquer the Holy Land"—and gave his blessing to the next attempt. The second children's crusade attracted 20,000 girls and boys, and this time was led by a German child named Nicolas, who came from Cologne. This crusade got no further than Italy, where all trace of the children was lost. The echo of this pathetic adventure lingers in the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

As children were dressed the same as their parents until about 1780, there is no history of children's clothes to report until then. We do, however, find references—in portraits and novels, in school-bills and inventories—before that date which give us glimpses of what children wore. Except for the smaller size, they are adult clothes. Defoe describes, in *Moll Flanders*, what was worn by a child of ten in an English poor-house in 1700, mentioning that the matron bought gloves, linen headdresses, and ribbons with the child's earnings, which were added to the charitable gifts



of stockings, petticoats, and gowns which clothed her. In the inventory of expenses of the Earl of Bristol for 1699 is mentioned the sum of £2 3s. paid for a periwig for his son, then seven years of age.

More interesting, perhaps, are the glimpses of rules of behaviour. Even the most affectionate families brought up their children without indulgence. They had to fear God and to fear their parents and teachers. Only when religious cynicism crept into social life in the eighteenth century do we find children being indulged.



YOUNG BOY

After a portrait by  
Hoppner in the Tate Gallery.  
English, 1800.

In the rules drawn up for the boy scholars of St Paul's School, established in 1512, John Colet, besides insisting on the passing of an examination before admittance, ordered, "Bring no mete drinke nor bottelis for use in the scole, no brekefastys nor drinkingis in the tyme for lerninge in no wise" (a reasonable request, which teachers to-day are still trying to enforce). But Lord Holland, a liberal and cynic, carried his indulgence of his children in the late eighteenth century to the point where, his son Charles James having expressed a childish desire to bathe in cream, his Lordship ordered the butler to fetch a large tureen full of cream for this purpose. And before Charles James was fifteen years old, Lord Holland accompanied him on the Grand Tour,

during which he allowed him £5 a day for the express purpose of gambling—a lesson the intelligent lad learned so well that before he was twenty-five he had incurred gambling debts of £140,000.

Round about 1800 there are many sentimentalized portraits of mothers and children, enfolded in each other's arms and regarding

each other with doting fondness. Yet at the same time little girls were kept stitching samplers by candlelight, with stitches so minute that their eyes must inevitably have suffered. Such a sampler, dated 1800, in the possession of the present writer, is stitched with ordered rows of stiff grape-clusters, alphabets, numerals, birds sitting on privet bushes, and virtuous sentiments enclosed in bordered squares.

Each moral pleasure of the heart,  
Each lasting charm of truth,  
Depends not on the giddy aid  
Of wild inconstant youth.

Virtue is the chiefest beauty of the Mind,  
The noblest Ornament of human Kind.  
Virtue's our safeguard and our guiding star;  
It gives us reason when our senses err.

And so on. The canvas is very fine, and the stitches a strain even to see separately. Not much freedom here.

Perhaps the indulgence was more for show than as a practical method of upbringing. The English miniaturist Andrew Plimer reflected the new attitude towards the young in regarding them as angels instead of treating them like devils. He often painted cherubs' wings on his portraits of children. Perhaps this pretty fancy was prophetic, for so many children still died young. Churchyards enclose many little graves with the same family name. Grasmere churchyard has rows of infant Wordsworth graves. Mary Shelley, despite her advanced views on nurture and education, lost two out of her three children.

It was in France that these new theories were most cultivated. A representative of the *tiers état*—replying in a letter to his wife, who had complained of the difficult character of one of their children—wrote:

The faults children commit is due less to inherent vice than to the natural frivolity of their age. Do be persuaded, my dear, of this truth, and you will soon find every satisfaction in your daughter. Though her natural merit may sometimes disappear, have we nothing to reproach ourselves with? Have we never alienated her sweetness by too harsh reprimands; minor faults pointed out and lack of attentions one should never deprive children of? Give her

proof of your confidence suitable for her age. Never speak to her but with gentleness and friendliness. Your order should be for her more a proof of your love for her than an imperial command to be obeyed. Converse with her kindly and familiarly, but be sure your conversations are useful and instructive.

Admirable as a theory—and so, no doubt, the harassed mother thought, trying in a provincial town to bring up a large family on a dwindling income with prices rising and no other help than



#### CHRISTENING PRESENT

Baby cushion of white satin with ornament and lettering worked in steel pins. English, 1780.

noble advice from her husband, busy in Paris with the pressing affairs of State.

But a far cry from the methods of inculcation of the seventeenth-century teacher, who, Henry Peacham declared in his *Complete Gentleman*, "in winter would ordinarily on a cold morning whip his boys over for no other purpose than to heat himself." Or Dickens's Mr Creakle.

From time to time educational reformers, like dress reformers, have tried out methods of education on 'free' lines in the belief



that their ideas are entirely new and will, if pursued diligently, bring the millennium. The Greeks tried them out, and so did those educational reformers all over Europe who endeavoured to follow the principles of Rousseau. Leigh Hunt's numerous children, for instance, who were never corrected on principle, made life unendurable for his friends. "They are dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos," wrote Lord Byron in despair to Mary Shelley. "What they can't destroy with their filth they will with their fingers."

After the French Revolution every kind of educational experiment was attempted, especially those based on the theory that everything must be left to nature. Children were nourished on bread, water, milk, and fresh fruits—made to sleep on chaff and to wear calico all the year round. Saint-Just proclaimed that it was equally wrong to punish or to caress children, and that games of pride and self-interest should be forbidden. And they had to learn to swim naked. All these experiments had to be conducted in the miserable, insufficient, and ill-lit schools which were all that had been inherited from the former régime.

By the 1830's children allowed to bathe in the sea at all had to wear quantities of clothes; little girls had to wear special corsets for the water—"guaranteed rustless."

In 1834 Bronson Alcott, the American educationist, started a series of experimental schools, first in Boston. He described himself as a "Garrisonian Abolitionist." And though his principles were of the noblest, all his schools failed financially and were bitterly attacked by the Press. One of his practices was that an erring pupil should be brought to reason by being allowed to beat the teacher he had wronged.

After the 1914-18 War many varieties of 'free' schools were started in England and on the Continent, especially in Germany, by educationists who believed that humanity had gone the wrong way and nothing but an entirely new start would avail. Many such schools were vegetarian and most disbelieved in uniform. The one common factor about the majority of these schools was that they were financially rickety, and because of that, and the high turnover both of pupils and teachers, most of them did not last long enough to yield much in the way of results, though they

may have been instrumental in introducing less rigid methods of teaching into ordinary State schools.

The difference is startling between the education of such a child as John Stuart Mill, whose father made him begin the study of Greek at the age of three, and that of the product of one of our 'progressive,' modern schools, where, despite the presence of a large and highly qualified staff (sometimes including former masters of Eton), and despite the entire lack of coercion, a child may well reach his late teens without having learned to read and write or even keep himself clean, because he had not expressed a wish to do so. One such school of 'freedom and nature' existed near Vence in 1935. The children went naked and ate only pure fruits (imported at enormous expense from as far away as Juan-les-Pins). Eggs were regarded as cannibal and given away, the chickens being kept as pets for the children. It is perhaps the child who is the chief sufferer from such 'freedom,' however much he may enjoy it at the time, because his life at school and his future life in the world are totally inconsistent. He may well become a recluse, fitted only for the society of his libertarian monastery.

Children, however, seem to be tougher and more resilient than is often supposed, and have proved infinitely adaptable to whatever method of education is put before them. Let us look a little more closely at the system of the logical French in their endeavour to inculcate the true principles of liberty into their children.

The French Revolutionaries, who believed they were making a new heaven and a new earth, paid much attention to the proper education of their children. Minister Lebrun named his child "Civilisation-Jemnapes-République"; a citizen from the Hautes-Alpes named his daughter Phytogynéantrope. And Brutuses, Lycurgues, Fructidors, and Constitutions abounded. No more unnatural, perhaps, than the "Praise-God-bare-bones" and "Binde-their-kings-in-chains-and-their-nobles-in-fetters-of-iron," which were bestowed upon their infants by devout Puritans in Cromwell's day, or the *Éliktrificata* (which, shortened to 'Fika,' passes almost unnoticed) which not a few Russian girls were named during the Soviet first five-year plan.

PARASOL and FAN

*Right:* SARAH BERNHARDT  
IN "LA DAME AUX  
CAMÉLIAS," 1881



*Left:* YOUNG LADY WITH  
FOLDING FAN, 1880  
Note cropped hair.



## CHILDREN'S DRESS



*Top left:* SIR ANTHONY COPE, BART., AGED ABOUT FIVE,  
CIRCA 1637

*Top right:* GIRL OF EIGHT, 1911

*Bottom:* PARIS FASHIONS FOR CHILDREN, 1880

Good patriotic French mothers in the dawn of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* taught their children a new catechism which ran like this:

Qui es-tu?

Je suis un enfant de la patrie?

Quelles sont tes richesses?

La liberté et l'égalité.

Qu'apportes-tu dans la société?

Un cœur pour aimer mon pays et des bras pour le défendre.

It was fashionable to dress one's children in red, white, and blue, or as miniature Gardes Civiles.

Even the "Tutoyer" became the subject of heart-burning legislation. The Revolutionary Committee of Tam put out a long statement about the necessity for contributing by every means to the destruction of the abuses of the old régime, and that therefore the anomaly must be cleared up of citizens addressing other citizens as 'you' and being answered 'thou.' It was shocking to the rule of reason, and the language should be regenerated, since the French were no longer an enslaved nation.

Rejecting the idea of original sin gave Restif de la Bretonne (of all people) the idea of working out an elevated plan for the reformation of youthful prostitutes. He proposed to confine erring girls in splendid institutions to be called Parthenions, there to study and occupy themselves with work of their own choice (all save one), without make-up, pommades, or perfumes being permitted. All was to be left to the healing forces of nature and the supervision of twelve carefully chosen worthy citizens, of such approved status as solicitors. Each girl was to have her own place, bed, chair, etc., marked by the name of a flower which she would also be known by, and this flower-garden of Hortensias, Amaranthes, Muguets, and Narcisses were to live harmoniously and tranquilly, performing suitable exercises for the elevation of their souls until their better nature should assert itself.

At the same time the more practical-minded organizers of the Grande Fédération of 1790, in order to welcome the National Delegates to Paris, printed a neat pocket-sized brochure (it ran into five editions) entitled *Tarif des filles du Palais-Royal, lieux circonvoisin et autres quartiers de Paris avec leurs noms et demeures.*

This in order to "faire acte de patriotisme en cherchant à éclairer le nombre infini d'étrangers que la fête amènera à Paris et que l'amour de la liberté attire tous les jours."



THE CULT OF SIMPLICITY:  
LADY GEORGINA FANE AS  
A BEGGAR-CHILD

From Lawrence's portrait in the Tate Gallery. English, about 1800.

In England, though children dressed more simply, there were no radical French ideas of social equality. Lord Byron all his life never forgot the awe and respect with which the headmaster sent for him one day to offer him a glass of wine and announce to him that he had inherited his title. And when at Cambridge he wore, like other noblemen, a special mortar-board trimmed with gold braid and a gold tassel.

In England well-to-do children benefited most from the new respect for nature and were allowed much more freedom to run about their parents' gardens, now also much less formal than before. Geometrical beds and borders and the straight alleys of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century were being rapidly replaced by more natural landscape-gardening. It was an expensive job and demanded the services of an expert such as the author of *Principles of Gardening* (in which are suggested such new amenities as "serpentine meanders" and "precipices" and "rude coppices").

The Gothic revival stepped on the heels of Rousseau's wild nature. Grottoes, hermitages, fake ruins, broken arches, were hastily erected in the rude coppices, and the children were soon the sufferers. Prudery clapped pantaloons on to young girls, and boys found their necks encircled by enormous starched lace collars.

Shelley as a boy home on leave from Eton used to terrify his



sisters, and himself too, by trying to raise the devil with lighted spirits in a china saucer and weird incantations. He was a true child of his time.

Corsets and an increasing number of petticoats accompanied the Gothic revival. Boys wore tight-waisted belts which restricted their diaphragms. Children once more, with a return to piety and regular church attendance, began to be treated as imps of Satan. Victorian England fed its children on a low diet of starchy foods and skim milk to keep down their evil spirits. Children of the poor were not in an economic situation which allowed even that. But even the children of the well-to-do were fed meagrely on principle. Their growth must certainly have been affected by their cramping garments and low diet, because surviving frocks and shoes are usually too small to fit present-day children of the same ages.

It is a painful thought that parents who themselves had enjoyed so much ease and liberty in their garments, as children at the turn of the century, should have been so heartless as to fasten their own children into the constricting clothes of the thirties and forties. The spirit of the age is more powerful than individual inclination, however. They had come to the belief, or it was fashionable to believe, that indulgence to children was harmful and that discipline of mind and body alike was their only hope of salvation.

A children's story-book published in 1837 under the title of *Anecdotes of Kings* was typical of the moral attitude towards the young of the time. It was written in the form of dialogues. Here is an example:

"Now, dear Mamma," said little Gertrude, "it is just the time for one of your nice stories. You see Papa has gone to sleep, and it will employ us so pleasantly till the candles come in."

Egbert's sparkling eyes seconded his sister's proposal. "Oh, that will be delightful," said he . . . "and let it be of some famous warrior, like Charles XII. I am so fond of hearing of battles."

To which the mother gravely replies:

"The life of an emperor or any ruler of a great kingdom is far from being a lazy one, Egbert, especially when it is spent, as Tar

Peter's was spent, in active and unwearied attempts for the good of his subjects. Perhaps if I were to tell you a few of the labours of this friend of his country you would see that his exertions both of mind and body were more numerous than those of a little boy whose greatest trouble is preparing a few lessons for his tutor."



BOY'S DRESS

"Dress for a young master of seven . . . may be seen in Broadway among our people of fashion." America, 1855.

"Thank you, dear Mamma," said Egbert, as a flush suffused his cheek. "Pray tell us."

And when the moral-studded story comes to an end:

"Dear Mamma," said Egbert, "Tsar Peter makes me quite ashamed of myself. I will begin from this day to be more persevering and industrious."

There were many poems written for children at this time with heavily stressed moral endings showing that diligence, neatness, sobriety, and implicit obedience were essential, and that one little lapse from any of them was bound to be attended by disaster. Heedless Emily begins her day of reckoning with:

"Dear me, what signifies a pin!  
I'll leave it on the floor;  
My pincushion has others in,  
Mamma has plenty more,"

and before the end of the poem has missed a party to see the new air-balloon, because she needed that very pin to fasten her pelisse, without which she was defeated. Moral:

And those who venture wilful waste  
May woeful want expect to taste.

Jane and Ann Taylor had a large public for virtuous verses of such a kind. They were also aimed at teaching children not to take too much pride in their fine clothes.

"Mamma, now," said Charlotte. "Pray, don't you believe  
That I'm better than Jenny, my nurse?  
Only see my red shoes and the lace on my sleeve,  
Her clothes are a thousand times worse."

I ride in my coach and have nothing to do,  
And the country folk stare at me so,  
And nobody dares to control me but you,  
Because I'm a lady you know.

It continues:

Then, servants are vulgar and I am genteel,  
So really 'tis out of the way  
To think that I should not be better a deal  
Than maids and such people as they."

The mother replies, not very convincingly, that gentility depends



on good manners and not on red slippers and lace. Most well-to-do homes were preoccupied with the social distinctions, and children of fashionable mothers were not likely to learn much humility from them.

As the century proceeded the discomfort of children's dress increased. Little girls wore tight stays, tight boots, seven petticoats, and cutaway shoulders impossible to keep in order because they were combined with extreme tightness of the upper sleeve. Boys had to go about their duties in extremely tight trousers, high tight boots with what we should to-day consider high heels, and constricting underwear. It was as though children's clothes were meant as a discipline and a penance. Possibly they were.

This is the period when *Shock-headed Peter* was to be found in every nursery. This Teutonic set of sadistic verses reads to us to-day like a psychologist's text-book, with such threats (always carried out in grisly detail) as

She'll burn to death,  
We told her so;

And she was burned, with all her clothes,  
And arms and hands and eyes and nose.

And the scissors-man, who did indeed come and cut off the thumbs from the little boy who persisted in sucking them—a monstrous tall man, with shears such as those used by fiends in hell in medieval pictures of damnation.

English middle-class children in the reign of Queen Victoria were brought up sternly, for they had to govern a large empire when they grew up, and administer the British way of life, in a manner that admitted of no doubt as to what was right and what was wrong, to millions of natives in distant parts of the world.

Queen Victoria set a popular fashion by dressing the royal children as sailors and Scotsmen. The mode for sailor-suits long outlived her day and is still kept alive by the more conservative working-class (and is still popular in Russia to-day too, both for boys and girls, where it is recommended as a suitable school uniform for little children). The white-ribbed blue collar and man-o'-war cap imprinted in gold with the name of an imaginary

battleship is still to be seen among the poorest boys whose destiny it very likely will be to enter the Royal Navy as ratings.

Mrs Burnett's sentimental story of the impoverished but irreproachably genteel American mother whose noble-hearted son was heir to vast English estates and an untarnished English title (rather a reversal of the state of affairs in our own day) caught the imagination of mothers of both continents. The black velvet Lord Fauntleroy suit with its Vandyke lace collar and accompaniment of flowing golden curls became Sunday best for millions of little boys, and fossilized itself for decades as the appropriate platform wear for musical prodigies.

In the nineties and nineteen hundreds, girls wore quantities of frilly underwear like their mothers, though of nainsook instead of silk. It was difficult and expensive to launder, and that added to its attraction. Even the white pinafore worn over the dress, supposedly for protection, had to have its frilled yoke and epaulettes carefully goffered, so that to all intents and purposes it was still another dress to be laundered.

Girls wore corsets from an early age: "almost as soon as the little girl is able to walk these are put upon her," says a book published in 1890.

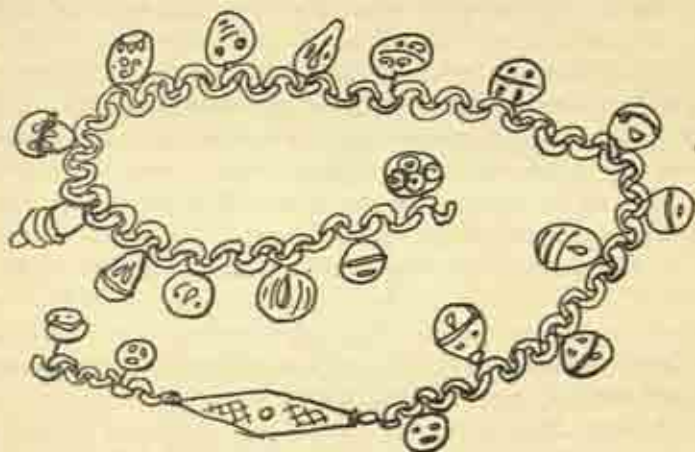
Poorer children aped the richer children's finery as best they could, often in the same clothes handed down through many different pairs of hands.

The education of girls had for fifty years or more been left to 'governesses,' whose chief qualifications for the job was that they had to earn their living and were cheap to hire. Dowries were essential for middle-class or upper-class girls who hoped to marry. Portionless girls of necessity were obliged to earn their own livings—a dreadful fate, because being a governess put her at the mercy of her employers, often of a lower social class, and her charges usually despised her as much as her employers did. All the literature of the Victorian era is full of references to unfortunate governesses. Their fate was really worse than prostitution, and the rewards infinitely less.

A commentator on the social scene wrote in 1855:

Young persons are rather inclined to consider teachers, particularly their private tutors and governesses, as their natural enemies.

Those who adopt such professions are entitled to much sympathy and good treatment. I could never understand how beautiful and accomplished girls, so tender and romantic as they sometimes seem, can pinch their governesses black and blue. *What will they do to their husbands?*



NECKLACE OF ASHANTI CHIEF

The charms were worn to ensure his wives' fertility and cast by the waste wax process learned from the Portuguese. African, seventeenth century.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the result of bitter personal experience, with its passionate defence of the rights of governesses, was published in 1847. Although she took good care to make the heroine of unspotted virtue and to endow her with a comfortable independent fortune at the end of the book as well, this novel was considered so scandalous because of the aspirations to love and marriage of the governess (who, Cinderella-like, weds her employer in the last chapter), that it was forbidden all decent libraries and had to be read by stealth by other governesses, who, it was feared, might get ideas from it. And it was never allowed to be put into the hands of young people.

The 1914 War had an enormous effect on children's clothes. They went into the War in black cashmere stockings and dressed



as stiffly as their mothers and fathers. They emerged in loose and easy clothes, with bobbed hair, jerseys, soft collars, socks instead of stockings. And since then there has been no looking back. So far.

In England to-day girls wear very comfortable cotton frocks in summer and easy sweaters and kilts in winter. Often they wear socks till they are sixteen or so, not to be juvenile, but for ease. It shocks no one to-day when girls play cricket or wear shorts and slacks like their brothers. School uniform does much to iron out the obvious differences in wealth between various families, but there is still much snobbery attached to the choice of a child's school. It is not only because elementary schools are overcrowded that many parents who cannot afford to do so send their children to private schools. It is not that they will be sure to receive a better education there either. Often they receive a worse one. It is snobbery, a disease which is still rife in England, despite two world wars and the loss of much of her former Empire. Perhaps, indeed, this state of world affairs has something to do with it. The preservation of what has come to be an upper-class accent has become a jealously guarded prop and comfort to many who cannot in any other way establish their social superiority, lacking the means to dress better or live better than those socially inferior but financially better off than themselves.

This peculiarly English form of snobbery has seeped right through the entire social fabric. Mothers of working-class households have been known to refuse to allow their children to play with other children living on the other side of the street where the rent, because of minor structural differences in the building of the house, is a fraction less than their own rent.

The dress worn by British children is markedly different from that worn by American children to-day, despite the growing tendency of American-styled children's clothes to be imported or manufactured here. American children, more independent, and American girls, more sophisticated than British children, mature younger and use make-up earlier. The hotter American climate may have something to do with this.

Many American girls of fourteen are already using nail-varnish and lipstick. Even American babies of two or three have been seen with their fingernails varnished and their hair permanently

waved—another example of the un-English point of view that adult life is preferable to that of childhood, and therefore the pleasures of maturity cannot be too soon conferred upon children.

Something must be said about baby-wear.

Examples survive of white satin pincushions elaborately pricked out in 'pinwork' with elegantly fanciful borders with such sentiments as "Welcome, sweet babe," and "May filial love repay the parent's care," and "Dear child, delay no time." They date from about 1810. The babies of this period may have been under-clad, but they were certainly not overclad, a fate which pursued them during the rest of the nineteenth century. Even as late as 1907 a learned authority pronounced: "Except in very hot weather children should have on one pound of clothes for every stone they weigh. Just now boys' clothes weigh twice as much as their sisters'."

The curator of Eton College museum in the same year says, "Petticoats for small boys are to be recommended in every way. The putting of infants at an early age into woollen knickerbocker suits cannot but be bad for them physically."

"The rate of infantile mortality," wrote the editress of a ladies' magazine at about the same period,

in this country is a disgrace. The ignorance of the average nursemaid is appalling, and though a board school may have acquainted her with the mysteries of the first book of Euclid or the rudiments of music, the curriculum rarely includes the simplest instructions on the healthy training of children, and in consequence the high rate of infantile mortality in this country is a national disgrace.

"Delicate babies," complains another reformer some time later, "have to wear a flannel skirt one and a half yards long. Over that, a long dress with heavy embroidery and a long double cloak for carrying out, so that the babies' dress reaches the floor when carried."

It was not the first nor the last time that babies have been dressed to display the social position of their parents or to enhance it by being dressed more extravagantly than their real social position warrants.

In 1929 *Vogue* reported, in an article on Society children, "Lady —'s baby's huge collection of nighties made by her nannie, and all miniature copies of her mother's ravishing ones, are things to dream about." And in the same article, "There is a certain walk in Hyde Park where only the prams pushed by nurses serving peeresses are allowed to promenade."



TUDOR BABY: RICHARD BEST

From a monumental brass in Merstham  
Church, Surrey. 1587.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### WHO SETS THE FASHION?

... the little shoes which have been the pride and torture of countless Chinese maids and matrons since Tung Hun-hou in A.D. 500 praised the dainty feet of his dancing concubine with the words "every step makes a lily grow."

*A modern Chinese critic*

IT is not always easy to fasten a new fashion on to a particular person. There are some who would claim the practice of binding the feet of female Chinese babies (to-day, fortunately, a vanishing fashion) dates from the time that the Empress Taki was born with club-feet, thus causing an edict to be passed proclaiming 'lily feet' a prerogative of feminine beauty. New fashions are most often launched by queens, celebrated courtesans, popular actresses, and famous dandies, who have only to appear once in something different to precipitate a new style.

Of these categories by far the most likely to set a new fashion has been the courtesan, though queens have often run them pretty closely. For one thing, until fairly recently there were strict sumptuary laws which forbade other ladies, even the noblest, to dress similarly to the queen, nor were his courtiers permitted by such laws to dress like their king. No such barrier prevented ladies from copying the style of dress of the king's mistress, however. And in periods and countries where women had an inferior position, such as ancient Greece or nineteenth-century Japan, the most attractive modes were reserved for the only women who were permitted to be cultured and elegant, because husbands and young men about town enjoyed their company more than that of their wives. The *hetærae* and the *geisha* girls always wore prettier garments than anyone else.

It is obvious that such ladies, owing to their profession, knew a great deal about the art of dress, and had but to wear something different once only for the rest of women to wish to copy. To lead

a fashion demands authority and self-confidence, which is more than the majority of women possess, though it be but in the placing of a bow of ribbon a little higher or lower on the dress. There can be little doubt that the successful courtesan is regarded with more envy than repulsion in the secret thoughts of respectable women. Who can say how many would-be Empress Theodoras might be found in the suburban villas of our city boroughs? Primly aproned housewives, weaving their fantasies to the whirr of their electric washing machines, often live dream lives that would have astonished a Lola Montez.

It is not the famous fashion designers who launch a new fashion. It is they who interpret what is in the air waiting to be transcribed into sartorial form. It is not the fashion houses that women follow when they buy a new dress. It is what Princess Margaret wore when she opened a new crêche, or what a favourite film star wore in her recent movie.

One of the famous courtesans in history was Agnès Sorel, daughter of a bourgeois family, who became mistress to Charles VII of France during the period of France's struggles to cast off the English yoke. Agnès Sorel had a delicate, sick beauty, anæmic and ethereal, blonde and egg-faced, that crystallized the current conception of beauty. Her influence accentuated the length of steeple headdresses, the transparency of veils, the low cut of bodices. She loved diamonds passionately and, according to the testimony of Georges Chastellain, launched the fashion for these jewels at the French Court. She ended her life in better style than other women in her position, by leaving the king after a quarrel and retiring to a convent she had founded, where, in the course of time, she died in the odour of sanctity. Jane Shore was less lucky. Despite the ennoblement of her children by him, Charles II, it is related, had failed to make proper provision for "pretty, witty Nell" Gwynn, so that in dying he had to beg his inheritors "let not poor Nelly starve."

As Mr James Laver has pointed out, it is only the victorious army which sets a fashion. Such was the beginning of 'slashing,' or, as it was usually called, 'blistering.' This mode originated in 1477, when the Swiss Army, putting to flight the Duke of Bur-

gundy's soldiers, made themselves underwear out of the tattered banners and tents of the enemy. These souvenirs of spoil from the vanquished Army, showing through their tattered clothes, were joyfully copied all over Europe. (See Chapter Two.)

Another military mode which started a fashion was the "Steinkerque" cravat, which owed its origin to the fact that French officers, being surprised in attack at the battle of Steinkerque, had no time to adjust their cravats properly, but flung them round their necks and quickly thrust the ends through button-holes of their jackets. When they won the battle this *dégage* improvisation became the new mode, which was copied not only by gentlemen all over Europe, but by ladies too, and received the cachet of adoption by the British Navy as a suitable style for stormy weather.

The cravat is one of the few gentlemen's fashions started by plebeians, originating with Louis XIV's Croat mercenaries attached to the French Army. These soldiers muffled their throats and breasts with a linen cloth, not for finery, but to give themselves magic protection from wounds—the linen cloth first concealing and then replacing the magic amulet they wore for this purpose.

Not a few fashions owe their origin to some such safety device. Pockets in men's clothes replaced hanging purses, because Charles IX, fearing assassination, forbade tailors in 1565 to make hanging purses, lest they harbour daggers or poniards. Similarly, bombast continued for a long time into the seventeenth century, because, as we have already mentioned, James I feared he might be stabbed.

Mme de Pompadour launched a hundred fashions. There is a coiffure worn to-day still named in her honour. She started the ruff again, a century after it had become *démodé*, because her throat was losing its beauty. Even toothpicks were named after her. She only held the King's affection for one year, but her influence was immense. She sent out *lettres de cachet* from her boudoir, and received Ambassadors and foreign Ministers at her morning *levée*. When her beauty began to fade she bought aphrodisiacs from Casanova, and by the age of thirty-five was a thin and haggard old woman. Her last act in dying, after she had taken the last sacrament, was to rouge her face.



Marie-Antoinette set the fashion of her Court until the Revolution. She was news, and everything she did was copied. Her extravagance and giddiness caused constant remonstrances from her experienced mother, Maria-Theresa, who constantly wrote her admonitory letters—such as:

All the reports from Paris say you have bought yourself bracelets costing 250,000 livres and plunged yourself into debt, etc. This French heedlessness! All these extravagant ornaments! My daughter the best of all Queens, to behave like this! The thought is unendurable.

The birth of the Dauphin and his daily toilet launched a new colour in Court circles. It was a dirty yellow known as "*caca*



MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS: THE PLEATED BARBE OF A WIDOW  
(SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

Her pride in her beauty was greater than her pride in her rank. She was entitled to wear the barbe covering her beautiful mouth and chin.

*dauphin.*" And when, after the birth of another of her children, Marie-Antoinette's pretty fair hair began to fall out, and after she had been ill had to be cut off, all the Court copied her new

simple hair-style, "*à la enfant*." This loss was a grief to her, because she had revelled in wearing extravagantly high headdresses. Her favourite, *à la Minerve*, required ten large ostrich-feathers.

Mme de Lauzun set an extreme fashion by appearing at Mme du Deffand's salon with an enormously high headdress, on the top of which appeared a stormy sea with ducks swimming, hunting and shooting scenes, a mill with a miller's wife flirting with a priest, and the miller leading an ass by its halter.

The French Revolution produced three particular leaders of fashion—Thérèse, divorced wife of the Marquis de Fontenay; Mme Récamier; and Joséphine Beauharnais. The Marquise—who became mistress of Director Barras, then of Tallien, whom she eventually married—ran a political salon with other courtesans and adventuresses. Her reputation was such that a wag one day pinned a public notice on her dress—NATIONAL PROPERTY. DO NOT DAMAGE. She liked to appear in her box at the opera clad only in a tiger-skin, as "*Diana*." She wore red and yellow wigs, and the rings on her toes she said were to cover the scars of rat-bites from her imprisonment during the Terror.

Julie Récamier had a softer, gentler beauty which showed to perfection in the vaporous, clinging 'Greek' robes she affected and the soft pearls which she liked to wear. She married a rich banker, and died of cholera in 1849, by which time respectability had overtaken the Paris of her youth.

Joséphine Beauharnais had the greatest career of them all. She was incurably extravagant. Even in times of famine she gave luxurious dinner-parties, and when she was already bankrupt she continued to buy herself luxurious clothes. At one time, too, she was in prison as a political suspect, where she shared a cell with the lady who afterwards became Madame Tussaud. Napoleon's future wife at this time possessed only six chemises and two pairs of tights—but this did not matter, as she hardly then bothered to wear underwear. Later on at her own Court she liked to change her lingerie thrice daily. She had wardrobes full of Grecian tunics, Indian shawls, etc., and wore nothing more substantial than a white cambric gown for her walk on the coldest and windiest days. She liked to wear quantities of jewellery, and



NELL GWYNN, ABOUT 1670  
After the portrait by Lely.



CHARLES-FREDERICK WORTH, 1880



LILY LANGTRY, 1882



# INFLUENCE OF THE EAST



*Top:* BRIGHTON ROYAL PAVILION, 1784-1827

*Below, left:* MRS PATRICK CAMPBELL IN "BELLA DONNA," 1911

*Below, right:* ORIENTAL EVENING TURBAN, 1828

her favourite diamond necklace was so long that it reached to her knees and had to be worn looped up to the bosom and there secured by a brooch. She was thirty-three when she met Napoleon.

Twice have garters set a fashion. When the Countess of Salisbury dropped her garter at Court, and King Edward III picked it up and returned it to her with the famous words now used as the motto of the Order of the Garter, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," it was, according to the latest authorities, a desire to protect her from the dread accusation of witchcraft—garters being associated with witches.

Mme de Fontanges it was who made famous another garter. Out hunting with Louis XIV one day she lost her hat and tied up her curls with her lace-edged garter—an effect which the King pronounced delightful, and which immediately, therefore, started a new mode. The *fontange* was launched. It soon developed into a high tower or ladder-like erection of lace and ribbons stretched on wire, which at its highest peak brushed the chandeliers and caused the doorways to be heightened and the roofs of carrying-chairs to be raised all over Europe. When the *fontange* was dropped from fashion—as a result of pretty Lady Sandwich, the wife of the English Ambassador, appearing upon presentation at Louis' Court in 1714 in a simple and becoming low-dressed coiffure—lace-makers all over Europe were ruined by the change of style.

If Brummell made clean linen and good tailoring fashionable, it was Lord Spencer, an eccentric nobleman, who launched the tail-less jacket still known by his name. He burned his coat-tails one day, by standing in his favourite position with his back too close to the fire. Whereupon, either out of folly or as the result of a bet (the latter story seems more probable), he walked about London in his coat after shearing off the burned tails. But the trend of the mode favoured this enterprise, because legs were fashionable.

Colours often owe their popularity to one person. It was Isabella, wife of Archduke Albert of Austria, who made a vow not to change her linen until the town of Ostend was taken by her armies. The siege lasted three years and three months, after which

'Isabella colour' became fashionable and was worn by smart people for over a century. It was yellow-grey. Diane de Poitiers, the beautiful and accomplished mistress of Henry II of France, set the fashion for wearing black and white, a chic mode which has never since gone out of fashion, and probably never will.

It was the Duchess of Portsmouth, who sat as model for the Britannia on our coinage, who was responsible for putting the British Navy into blue and white. Charles II saw her out riding one day in an attractive blue-and-white riding suit, and ordered the same combination of colours for naval uniform.

Patches have been claimed to originate with a lady who wished to hide an ugly wen on her face in the reign of Edward VI. But they are much older than that. As we have already seen, the Romans used patches, and it is probable that the Egyptians did too.

Rubber top-boots are still called Wellingtons by children to-day, after the conqueror of Waterloo—though it is only by their shape that a resemblance to his footwear may be traced. Old-fashioned people sometimes call heavy boots bluchers. Mr James Laver has connected the post-Great-War vogue for the crammed-down toque to the tin helmet of that war.

The only fashion the Second World War has introduced is the duffle-coat, with its wooden buttons fastening with braid, a Navy winter garment which started its vogue humbly enough by being sold cheaply in Government surplus stores shops at a time when coupons for clothes made any addition to the wardrobe welcome. It caught on speedily, however, and to-day expensive coats are made exactly to the same pattern, though ladies' coats are sometimes dyed to distinguish them from men's equally popular duffle-coats. They are also fashionable for children.

The mode for exaggeratedly wide-toed shoes has been attributed to many different people who, by reason of bloated feet or some other physical defect, had reason to wish to conceal their shape. It was a mode which originated in Flanders and was known as "duck-bills." The extremely long-toed shoes which preceded duck-bills have been blamed on Fulk Réchin of Anjou, who is said by Orderic to have invented them to hide the monstrous bunions on his feet.



The badge the school-child of to-day wears on his cap or in front of her school hat is derived from the ensign of the pilgrims of the Middle Ages.

Black for evening wear for men did not become smart until after the publication in 1828 of Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham*, wherein he had casually observed, "people must be very distinguished to look well in black." Previous to this blue, as ordained by Beau Brummell, was the accepted colour for evening coats. It is curious that the only effort in our day to change the colour from black should again have reverted to blue. But tradition is more esteemed in men's clothes than originality.

Lily Langtry, plump, fair, and classic, set the fashion for wearing close-fitting jersey bodices. She was reputed, in the care she took of her figure, to bath in her corsets. She was a reigning beauty and an indifferent actress for twenty years towards the end of the nineteenth century. "To know her," wrote a contemporary journalist with enthusiasm, "is a privilege, to live with her an education."

In our era of rapid communication and mass entertainment, a new fashion can become popular within almost a matter of hours. The cinema to-day—far more than the stage, though perhaps less than television in the future—sets new standards of facial and bodily beauty, usually of the American pattern, since there are far more American than other films on the market. Wide-mouthed women with loosened hair and over-developed bust, men with exaggerated shoulders and a snub nose, are the current formulæ. Such are the heroes and heroines of our time, repeating their performances endlessly every day and every night on a million screens and appearing in lurid colours in American-styled comics, eagerly devoured by countless adults and children in every continent where the American soldier has been to introduce the taste for them.

It was England which set the fashions, for men at least, after the French Revolution. Rousseau had advocated a return to pastoral simplicity, and the English country gentleman, though he rarely had heard of Rousseau and his theory, lived a quiet rural life in comfortable clothes and without city distractions. Voltaire, whose influence was enormous, admired the integrity of the English

trader and his secure position in the pattern of English life. So English beer was drunk in Paris by French Anglomanees, and Brummell and Lord Byron were copied not only in France, but as far away as St Petersburg and New York.

It is America who sets the fashions after the Second World War. Her financial power and her influential film industry have made this inevitable. Though the screen life of a particular film star is usually short, fresh recruits take up the pattern and advertise it until it is firmly stamped into current life. To-day Jane Russells and Marlon Brandos stalk the streets of whatever cities in the world show American films. Whereas the ancient Greeks worshipped manly strength in the form of Hercules, our present age has set up Superman, who, for all his exaggerated shoulders, relies on the cunning of applied modern science and the use of the Tommy-gun.

As the world's film industries gather strength it may be that in time we shall come to worship other types of beauty than the current American models. Already the French films have set up a new conception of a more intelligent type of female beauty, and the Italian films a new kind of heroine with a longer Latin nose than the American standard. The British film industry, though suffering every kind of discouragement, has popularized a more restrained and better-mannered type of woman. It is possible to conceive in the future a standard of beauty being set by gentle-faced Indian film-stars with discreetly arranged hair and harmonious movements, or moon-faced Chinese film-stars with no bust and a small mouth. All that is necessary is that absorbing Indian or Chinese films shall be repeatedly shown in the world's cinemas.

Before films became so popular it was the stage that set the fashion, and before that—for the Puritan prejudice against the theatre has died hard in England—it was the novel. How many solid middle-class women to-day bear the name of Wendy, because their parents were enraptured with *Peter Pan*? In their heyday Ellen Terry and Mrs Patrick Campbell were admired and slavishly imitated—though not to the same degree as Vivien Leigh is to-day, because the film is so much more far-reaching.

Dickens gave almost as many popular expressions to the English

language as Shakespeare. The Dolly Varden hat was named after one of his heroines.

How many English baby girls were named Dora after the heroine of *David Copperfield*—that pretty, silly, undeveloped, and irresponsible 'child-wife' being exactly to the taste of Victorian parents, who strove to keep their girls ignorant and biddable. It is known that Dickens wept bitterly when he was writing the scene of her death, though he was careful to kill her off in order to give the hero a sensible, practical wife to look after him in his days of success.

Morality would have preferred Thackeray similarly to have polished off the heroine Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*—for it is Becky Sharp, the attractive, clever, worldly-wise siren with red hair, who dominates the book, and not the weak and stupid Amelia, though Amelia is the official heroine. For all her lack of morality Becky, with no one to help her and no family connexions, at least diligently per-

severes, despite set-backs, to make her way in the world. That her goal was to us so paltry is beside the point (if, indeed, entry into the highest society be paltry). It was not considered so in her day and age. Amelia, after the ruin of her father and the death of her husband, is unable to stir a finger to help herself or her son.

Becky's diligent church-going in the last chapter, in order to try to worm her way back into at least one section of English society after her disgrace and exile, has a startling parallel in real life in Mary Shelley. Having suffered social ostracism all her life,



CULT OF THE EXOTIC: LORD BYRON  
IN ALBANIAN DRESS

After the portrait in the National Portrait  
Gallery. Early nineteenth century.



first from her parents' advanced views and then from her husband's, Mary Shelley after Percy Bysshe's death made such earnest efforts to be received into respectable society that when Lord Byron's last mistress Contessa Guiccioli (whom she had known intimately in Italy) desired in 1830 to pay her a call while on a visit to England, she was reduced to a state of terror lest her narrow-minded neighbours should find out.

Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell, perhaps better than any other character on the English stage towards the end of the nineteenth century, typifies the overwhelming, magnificent woman then admired; self-assured, rich, witty, whose superb clothes and infallible sense of occasion crowned a very mixed society where birth was highly important, but wealth equally if not more so.

The 1926 boy-girl, with her elongated ear-rings and passion for Negro rhythm, was idealized in Michael Arlen's *Green Hat*. She was a slight, long-legged creature whose gifts ran to driving a car and shaking a cocktail, and she regarded housekeeping and the bearing of children with as much fear and dismay as Dora Copperfield.

Dora died in childbed because she could not face responsibility, and the heroine of *Sleeveless Errand* (a typical homosexual novel of the mid-twenties which became a *succès de scandale* by being banned) drove her powerful car over a precipice for precisely the same reason.

Fashion to-day is eagerly followed by millions of women who go out to work for a living and model their hats on those worn by Princess Margaret. The fact that they work in factories and offices does to some extent limit the fantasy they are able to indulge in. We are hardly likely to see girls working at the bench in long trains, giant hoops, or bustles, though it is true that factory girls in the seventies did indeed go to work in trains and bustles and that cooks in the sixties did indeed work in crinolines that swept the utensils off the table.

At the same time it is true to say that cleanliness is now more esteemed than it used to be—another factor that mitigates against utterly impracticable garments. Nylon is popular, because it does not need to be ironed, and because it is easily washed and dried. Mass-produced modern American garments tend towards the practical instead of the impractical. A clever American ladies'

skirt for the masses, now on the market, looks like an ordinary working skirt, but it can be turned inside out in the cloakroom after work to become a fashionable, shimmering party skirt, suitable for an evening out.

Fashion to-day is obliged to take into consideration more than a fabulously wealthy few. Otherwise the designers would go bankrupt. Norman Hartnell, one of the brightest names in British fashion, designed the uniform for the A.T.S. besides the celebrated wedding and coronation gowns for our present Queen Elizabeth II of England.

English fashion houses have improved until they are now in a position to challenge French ones. 1954 will witness an important battle between Christian Dior, who proposes to introduce knee-length skirts, and Norman Hartnell, who says firmly he will design nothing so unbecoming for his English clients. The fashionable "boy's cut" coiffure of Paris women in the autumn of 1953 is favouring Dior. What will happen?

Two terrible wars have bankrupted the middle classes of Europe, and it is hard to realize it is barely fifty years since Révillon of Paris kept a million sumptuous fur muffs in stock at prices ranging from £4 for a fox to £1000 for natural Russian sables.

The modern dinner-jacket, or in America 'tuxedo,' was invented as recently as the nineties in Monte Carlo, because the tailed evening coat was becoming an intolerable strain when worn for hours on end at the gaming tables. The Duke of Windsor, when Prince of Wales, encouraged by his example the occasional wearing of a white tie with such a dinner-jacket, though not infrequently it had the effect of causing guests to be mistaken for waiters. Another fashion launched by the same person was Fair Isle knitting for male sports wear. This gesture proved an enormous stimulus to what had dwindled almost to a dying industry in the Shetlands.

Trousers have their own legends. There was a heated controversy recently in the columns of *The Times* as to the origin of turned-up or cuffed trousers. The editor of the *Tailor and Cutter*, Mr John Taylor, finally wrote:

SIR,

Your correspondence concerning the original date and the derivation of trouser turn-ups has become so prolonged and so many factions are now involved, that I feel it my public duty to settle the dispute.

In the year 1858 Mr Aloysius Bredloser (a highly successful kitchen-range manufacturer of the period) attended for a final fitting at his tailor's in Albemarle Street only to find that the trousers were too long. To mark the alteration his tailor turned up the bottoms of the trouser legs and pinned them to the required length.

Casually inquiring the price of the suit, Mr Bredloser was startled to find it somewhat beyond his budget, and taking advantage of the tailor's temporary absence (he had gone for a piece of chalk), Bredloser hot-footed it for home, leaving his old suit in part exchange. As the trouser alterations had never been effected, Bredloser was compelled to retain the turned-up portion—swearing that he preferred them that way.

The apparent idiosyncrasy caught on amongst his friends and became finally the fashion.

The date of Mr Bredloser's fitting (research discloses) was April 1st, 1858; and the time at which he silently pulled the door to behind him and launched himself upon Albemarle Street and society with his trousers turned up was 3.46 P.M. I trust that you will now close this correspondence and oblige,

Yours, etc.,

The date seems worthy of notice in this entertaining story.

Side creases in men's trousers instead of front creases are quite recent sartorial history. The late King George V always wore his so, as did many naval men. Side creases immediately preceded the fashion for front creases. During most of the nineteenth century men's trousers had been tubular in shape and worn much too tight to permit any crease at all. They were strapped tightly under the instep to keep them smoothly fitted.

It was Queen Victoria's jealousy which started the fashion for red flannel petticoats so typical of her reign. After Prince Albert had admired a Scottish peasant girl dressed in a red flannel petticoat walking across a field in Balmoral, the Queen ordered one for herself.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE EAST

#### *A.A.F. Cloth Escape Maps*

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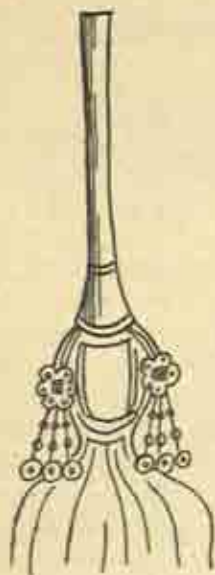
*Advertisement in the "New Yorker" (September 1952)*

THE influence of the East upon Western dress and custom has been very considerable. The West has many times taken war to the East and returned with new ideas in clothes, behaviour, and morals. To take three different periods only; there was the enormous influence of the Crusades which brought back to Europe far more than it took to the Saracens. There was another mighty surge of Eastern influence during the eighteenth century, which was given additional impetus before it had spent itself by Napoleon's Egyptian campaign; again, the two wars of 1914 and 1939 have brought strong Oriental influences into Western life.

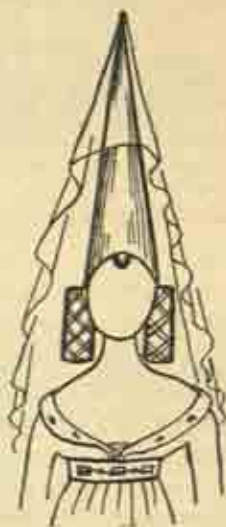
Most of the Crusaders were illiterate. The Crusades afforded an honourable means of ridding the country of considerable numbers of unemployed and also of not a few belligerent younger sons of noble families who had no expectations of their own other than what they might win in the wars. The double Papal blessing must have proved irresistible to miscreants and outlaws seeking sanctuary, and the hope of loot attractive to every man who enrolled.

When they came into contact with the luxury and rich culture of the Saracens the Crusaders were amazed, and some even gave up the struggle to bring the Cross back to Jerusalem and settled down, after a minimum of fighting, to a luxurious life of Moorish divans, mosaics, rich silks, and Oriental women. There is a tribe

(the Khevsurs) living high up in the mountains of the Caucasus who still wear for their festal dress chain armour and a surcoat blazoned with a red cross—descendants of Crusaders who went no farther than this on their Crusade, but stayed and interbred



Female Druse headdress of  
great antiquity.



The hennin headdress  
(European, 1475).

#### FASHION FROM THE EAST

with local people. Others returned to England laden with splendid Saracenic embroideries and Eastern manners and customs.

Pestilence in Europe and famine in Flanders sent thousands more recruits into the eastward movement of crusading armies, and the flow continued for hundreds of years, sweeping along with it runaway monks, escaping debtors, and social misfits of all kinds, besides honourable and pious knights and their retainers, until the last Crusade was sent out in 1443. The crusading spirit lingered long afterwards, however, and such early explorers as Vasco da

Gama and Christopher Columbus, though they went for gold, carried the crimson cross on their breasts.

Such a vast traffic was bound to exert a great influence. Guide-books were written to help such of the Crusaders as could read. New methods of war were learned from the Saracens, such as sapping and mining, and new kinds of siege instruments and a new kind of sword and new bow were copied from them. The tournament itself was taken in essence from the Arabian 'Jerd' (equestrian exercise). Taxation for the outfitting of the Crusades was the beginning of the system of regular modern taxation. Mathematicians received a notable impulse from the Spanish Arabs, and Christian missions were obliged to undertake the study of Oriental languages. Much English poetry was written with the Crusades for a theme; new words crept into the language—such as 'tariff,' 'lute,' 'algebra,' 'corvette,' etc.; new foods—such as sugar, maize, lemons, melons, and apricots. 'Morris' is really Moorish dancing. New motifs in architecture; new plants; new colours whose names derived from Arabic words—such as 'lilac' and 'purple,' 'azure' and 'gules'; new refinements—such as face-powder and glass mirrors. Even the rosary itself was borrowed from Arab culture.

The Crusades profoundly affected the history of Western costume. The turban, so fashionable both for men and women of high rank during the Middle Ages, was copied directly from Saracen dress. The Mohammedan invasion of Sicily resulted in the establishment there of several famous schools of Oriental designers and weavers, whence silk tapestries found their way to this country. Some of the Arabic patterned borders also show a distinctively Chinese feeling in the depiction of birds and animals not common to Mohammedan art, wherein to disguise the forbidden realism the birds and animals have foliage sprouting from their legs.

Pointed toes for shoes came to us from the Saracenic and Turkish traditional turned-up toes.

The art of heraldry, which was so much used to adorn medieval dress, received an enormous impetus from Saracenic art. So also with Western music. The Saracenic horn was capable of much more varied and more subtle sounds than the crude English horn,



and the hunting fanfare "tally-ho" is believed by some authorities to be derived from the Syriac "Taleb-Yon!" (meaning 'There's the fox'). Horse-brasses are another bauble borrowed from the Arabs at the time of the Crusades, the popular crescent moon having come to the Arabs themselves from Egyptian sources. These horse-brasses were amulets of a magic nature, and all the designs have prophylactic intentions.

English hunting and hawking also borrowed much from the Saracens—new types of lighter horses, new breeds of hounds, new methods of handling hawks—for the English were infatuated with hunting, as were their enemies, and one old chronicler said, "They hunted on their way to the Holy Land and on their way back and during the campaigns there they hunted all the time, even eating and sleeping."

It is interesting that Richard I of England's great enemy Saladin was himself a man of noble nature and abstemious habits, pious and extremely brave. These qualities the Crusaders themselves recognized in him, and when he asked them to explain to him their ideas of chivalry he replied, "These I have kept from my youth onwards."

New materials which the Crusaders brought back from the Holy Land and introduced into this country were damask (from Damascus), felt, cotton, and muslin, and the word 'gauze' (deriving directly from the town of Gaza). The steeple headdress, borrowed from the headdress of certain sects of Jewish women in Jerusalem, where it can still be seen to-day, was enlarged and became the rage of fashionable Europe.

After the Crusades had ended trade relations continued to supply this country with Eastern jewels and costly silks.

It was the nabobs of the English eighteenth century, returning from their years of profitable trading in India, who introduced into English dress the Indian turban, the chintz dressing-jacket, and a liking for Indian spices and oranges. At the same time there was considerable trade with China, and many designs for dinner-services were sent out to China to be painted there on Chinese porcelain, following the English pattern and written instructions. These were sometimes returned with the written instructions in-

corporated in the Chinese style with the painted patterns. Chinese motifs were introduced into architecture and furniture, and exquisitely embroidered Chinese panels of silk were made into gentlemen's waistcoats. There was much sympathy in eighteenth-century cultivated English circles with the calm, reasoned, and delicate arts of China, the most distinguished salons in London were papered with Chinese wallpaper, and ornamental little tables in bamboo were then thought the acme of grace and distinction. (It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that bamboo degenerated into furniture made in the gimcrack lodging-house style with which English railway-station hotels are so often rendered hideous, at least to our present taste.)

China tea-clippers, their great sails wide spread to catch every breath of wind, raced across the seas bringing the finest pick of the new tea crop to the tables of fashionable London—and, incidentally, bringing a comfortable income to their captains, for two of the handsomest Georgian houses in London belonged to such sea-captains and may still be seen to-day, in all their original architectural beauty, on Wapping Pierhead.

In the eighteenth century began a vogue for Oriental lacquer which is still with us to-day. Brighton Pavilion, the Prince Regent's dream of Eastern splendour combined with gentlemanly elegance and refinement, is adorned with a series of swelling Ottoman-inspired cupolas grafted on to Gothic revival turrets and rising above a plain Adam foundation. It was completed in 1827. Its interior was first brightly painted in the Chinese fashion and afterwards changed to pseudo-Greek white and gold with all the bamboo furniture removed to upstairs bedrooms. The taste changed quickly from Chinese butterflies and flowers to brass sphinxes and classical marble columns. Lacquered fans of great value and Chinese Chippendale chairs and tables were hastily banished in favour of everything *à la grecque*. In these classical-cum-Oriental salons the ageing Regent (he had at last become King the very year the Brighton Pavilion was completed) made merry with his train of attendant nymphs, chief of whom was the avaricious "lady steward" of his profligate household, Lady Conyngham. They were garbed in clinging white muslin to look like statues, with the addition of a



tiny ruff, accentuating the half-naked bosom, to look like the romantic Mary Queen of Scots.

One of these gowns recently was sold in good faith by a second-hand clothes dealer, as a baby's christening robe—which, indeed, it exactly resembled, for it was made all in one piece of fine muslin and Lille lace, and the bodice, which fastened at the back with tapes, measured scarcely five inches in width.

Brass sphinxes and winged gryphons decorated elegant Empire furniture after Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, while the Empress Joséphine's passion for cameos kept the jewel-fakers busy. Madame Récamier's bed combined swans on top of gilt pillars, brass vestals, and lilac fringed curtains upheld by gold chains. The standard of learning in classical matters was not high, so that any garment that clung and was transparent enough was called "Greek," and endless new coiffures were named at random after Greek goddesses. Egyptomania impelled Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and John Keats to sit down together and engage in a poetic contest on the subject of "The Nile."

In 1818 the following paragraph appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* above the name of Priscilla Plainstitch (who, it was believed, was none other than Charles Lamb):

My eldest boy rides on a sphinx instead of a rocking-horse, and my youngest has a pap-boat in the shape of a crocodile. My husband has built a water-closet in the form of a pyramid and has his shirt marked with a lotus. My eldest girl's music-master was turned away because he could not teach her to play on the sistrum, a thing like a horse-shoe. . . .

Some modish ladies went so far as to wear Turkish trousers of billowing gauze beneath their pseudo-Greek draperies.

So enraptured were the inhabitants of this island with everything exotic that a half-crazed Devonshire servant-girl, by wandering as far from her native county as Almondsbury and stubbornly refusing to appear to understand English, actually persuaded many excellent and learned people there, and even more in Bath, that she was the Princess Caraboo of Jevsu, a mysterious Eastern Island somewhere near China. She was able to keep up this deception for many weeks—banging gongs and



refusing meat or wine, subsisting on vegetables, arranging her garments in an Oriental manner, and roosting on tall trees to keep herself safe from gentlemen, etc. The hoax was only exploded by a chance meeting with a former lodging-house keeper with whom she had once boarded. This servant, whose name was Mary Baker, disappears from history for a while, to reappear a few weeks later—according to the testimony of a letter from Sir Hudson Lowe, printed in the *Bristol Journal* as having been received from St Helena (September 13, 1817)—on the island of St Helena, where Napoleon had welcomed her as an authentic princess and bestowed upon her every mark of confidence and favour.

A hoax is like a snowball rolling downhill—once begun it rapidly increases in size. What is remarkable about this story is that people in England were already, by their fascination for anything Eastern, quite prepared to believe her story and came more than half-way to meet her.

About this time, too, reappears that popular old ballad *Lord Bateman*—a rambling account of a proud lord whose life was saved by the devoted daughter of a Turk, and how she followed him to England and interrupted his marriage ceremony by reminding him of his promise to be true to her. (Surely an echo of Lord Byron's adventures in the East.) It is certainly true that Lord Byron had a lot to do with the popular worship of the East, for his poetic effusions were eagerly read and such lines as

twelve rings were on her hand.  
Her hair was starred with gems; her veil's fine fold  
Below her breast was fastened with a band  
Of lavish pearls, whose worth could scarce be told;  
Her orange silk full Turkish trousers furl'd  
About the prettiest ankle in the world

were enough to send every Englishwoman hurrying to her dress-maker to order something in the same genre. It is certainly also true that Byron's dislike of seeing women eat caused many women who had never met him to push aside their dinner feeling that food was gross. Byron used to say he had lived too long in the East, where Mohammedan women were not permitted to eat at the same table as the lords and masters.

There is often some wholly material explanation of the most romantic gestures. Byron disliked food because he had so disordered a liver that eating always made him ill. Napoleon's celebrated left hand thrust into the bosom of his equally celebrated grey coat should seriously be considered not in the accepted light of a gesture of defiance, but for what it really was, an attempt to relieve his chronic indigestion by secretly rubbing his stomach under his coat.

Traffic with India and China has left its relics in almost every home in Great Britain. There are few sitting-rooms without a brass and teak table, a sandal-wood box, a carved ivory tusk or ivory interlocking balls intricately pierced and moulded, or an Oriental cashmere shawl. Even the ordinary Tommy Atkins out in India on military service would bring home some trifle of brass from Benares. We have perhaps grown too used to seeing ghurka knives fastened on the walls of chaste Victorian sitting-rooms and extending siesta arm-chairs made of bamboo and cane on the trim lawns of suburban villas to realize the tremendous story of the clash of cultures of which they are evidence.

How often, in the sedate gardens of Tonbridge, can an elderly gentleman still be observed reclining on such a rattan extending chair, well wrapped in a plaid rug (for he cannot get accustomed to his chilly native climate after so long a service in India), his right hand instinctively reaching out for his chota-peg, which ought to be in the round hole thoughtfully provided for in the weaving of the arm-rest of the chair. He still receives flowery letters from his old Indian servants, now accustoming themselves to a new and still changing régime. And, of course, he does not know what the country is coming to.



MAN'S EAR-RING  
OF COPPER, TUR-  
QUOISE, AND  
PEARL.

Six inches in  
length. Tibetan,  
1933.

Poor though he was, Dr Johnson could afford a Negro servant in the eighteenth century. He probably gave him his livery and food and a pittance, though slavery was accepted as perfectly natural and a wise dispensation of Providence by many people who considered Wilberforce a dangerous crank.

The British alliance with Russia in the 1914 War stimulated a curious flame of exoticism which the Ballet Russe, from the moment the impresario Diaghilev brought it to Paris in 1907, had already set alight, with its impassioned dancing and dazzling colour. Beads, tassels, opulent feathers, luxurious furs, were all dragged into the decoration of wildly coloured new modes to give an Oriental look. Until the Revolution of 1917 the magic word 'Russian' was enough to sell the most extravagant style of hat, and nothing was too good for the Slavs. 'To wear the Russian Blouse,' reported *Vogue* patriotically in 1916, "is to express sympathy with the allies and the mode."

It was not considered inconsistent, when the hardship of the War was already beginning to make itself felt, to buy "Imperial Russian Lilas Bath Tablets, sold by Vladimir Smirnoff (London and Petrograd), also Savon Imperiale Russe packed in yellow satin," because "Russian perfumery," explained *Vogue*, "is the note of the moment."

A pearl headdress with three rows of paradise feathers, an evening-dress of black satin with two pointed trains ending in heavy gold tassels, etc.—such frivolities accompanied the growing queues for potatoes in the cold London streets and the increasingly heavy casualty lists in the newspapers. "One model gown banded with marmot and skunk," *Vogue* reported, announcing the smartness of the new furs, "makes you feel like a Russian Princess with miles of names and a Winter Palace."

At a time of real food scarcity the fashion for exotic furs was having a *succès fou*. "Long-haired furs," says *Vogue* in December 1916, "are once again in favour for the excellent reason that they are scarce and hard to get. . . . Fur trimmings to skirts and manteaux must be at least eight inches deep and worn with an immensely high collar."

Fur was used to trim handbags, pin-cushions, high military



boots. A high-necked modesty was successfully carried out in pink chiffon trimmed with seal. And the fashion grew still more extravagant with the deepening hardship of the war years.



FASHION FOR THE EXOTIC:  
ENTIRE SNOW-LEOPARD SKIN WORN AS TIPPET  
*Jay's Catalogue, 1913.*

"Fur is on everything, the more exotic the better. Kolinsky, bearskin, mink, weasel, ruffled mole edged with vison; otter, Mongolian goat . . ."

There is something in the wholesale slaughter of inedible fur-

bearing animals for show and not for warmth which parallels the wholesale massacre of young lives on the muddy battlefields of France, where from war-swept cities sumptuous brocades were still miraculously pouring out, to be made into amazing evening gowns for the luxurious nightclubs of London and Paris. Young officers snatched a couple of days from the filth and horror of the trenches and rushed to see *Chu Chin Chow*, which, with its catchy tunes and shoals of exotic girls in glittering and fantastic pseudo-Oriental costumes, hit exactly the right note of escapism and ran on and on for years.

Not only was it vital to dress exotically. Houses had to be re-decorated in the new fashion, too. By 1918 such a carefully thought-out scheme as "a lampshade of cerise silk with black silk tassels" was used to brighten a room whose furniture was all painted emerald green and carpeted with black. For Chippendale chairs *Vogue* recommended black and white cushions with black and gold tassels. The acme of chic was a red-violet sitting-room, including ceilings, carpets, walls, and furniture of the same colour, for which Lanvin designed a smart lampshade of red lacquer with bead roses on a red shade.

The Russian Revolution had given smart European Society a shock, but there were numbers of exiles to keep up the aristocratic tradition by marrying into good English families or opening more nightclubs. The Bakst influence and the palette of Paul Poiret were to be found in every suburban sitting-room all over the country. *Vogue* recommended, as a charming room for a young girl, "Bright blue walls, ceiling, and carpet, with blue velvet window curtains over inner curtains of bead-trimmed blue gauze. A table of heliotrope and gold. Blue divan with rose-coloured cushions."

The craze for luxurious appointments extended to bathrooms, which even in the most desperate stages of the War were hastily being redecorated by those who could afford it (and some of those who could afford it had been making a fortune by cornering sugar), with such amenities as "apple-green glass walls, a beaded bell-rope, and a polar bearskin for a bath-mat." A bathroom specially designed for a rich child is described as having "a sunk round bath of porcelain. Water comes through two china

rabbits' mouths, hot or cold, by pressing their ears, and there are the child's toilet bottles to match with rabbit stoppers."

Parties went on without pause, and *Vogue* suggested, as suitable for popular fancy-dress balls, dressing up as a "frog, a fountain with streams of pearls dripping, or a fish-pond."

The food queues were growing longer daily when the Empress Club began to solicit contributions for their "Tubs for Tommies" fund, so that the soldiers in billets might enjoy the luxury of a bath every week instead of every month as formerly—"Tommy likes to fight with clean hands in a physical sense no less than in a moral sense."

On another page *Vogue* felt obliged to mention that the question of food was creeping into even the best drawing-rooms: "No longer need we conceal our small economies, for the cost of everything from half a pound of butter to a trip to Brighton is now the very smartest subject of conversation." The cookery expert bravely offered a recipe for making mock rissoles out of dried peas.

When, in 1922, Howard Carter excavated the royal tomb of Tutankhamen there was an im-

EVENING GOWN: ROSE-RED SATIN TRIMMED WITH SEQUINS AND DIAMANTE EMBROIDERY

From Mrs Langley Moore's collection. English, 1920.



mediate reflection of this event in the clothes of the day. Long, straight dresses and coats were cut to fit as tightly as mummy-swathings, and no fashionable woman could walk properly. Sand-colour for shoes and stockings too was the extreme of chic: it was called "Sahara." Alternately there was another fashion for wearing black printed in horizontal stripes between which were



designed rows of something that were intended to look like hieroglyphics. And Pharaoh's regal fillet inspired the craze for evening headbands which came down over the eyes or were worn half-way down the forehead with the hair wildly pulled out from underneath. It was fashionable to show nothing but eyes, and they had to be dark and mysterious. Theda Bara, the early film star, was regarded as ideally exotic. She lay about on tiger-skins on low divans, wrapped in shapeless garments dripping with tassels, and biting her enormously long strings of beads.

There was no middle to frocks, and the horizon of a dress—if it ever could be said to have one at all—was somewhere near the knees, where the long string of beads ended in a lump of jade or a piece of amber the size of a man's fist, or failing all else, in another tassel.

Curiously enough, though breathless interest centred on the exploits of our Eighth Army during the Second World War, there was no reflection of this in the mode. Or perhaps it is not really curious, because there was no mode at all. For the first time in history the hardship and the shortages caused by a war affected the rich as well as the poor, and the number of clothing coupons was the same at all income levels. Though there was undoubtedly some traffic in coupons, there was never enough to constitute a serious threat to the system of rationing. It became a question of patriotism, when so many of the population of both sexes were in uniform, to wear out one's old clothes or contrive new clothes from cast-offs; and not a few mothers bought standard linen wiping-up cloths to make into clothes for their young children, until these linen cloths too were rationed. No new mode came out of the desert campaign except the fierce Eighth Army moustache, equally popular with the R.A.F., and the nostalgic song *Lili Marlene*, which the British soldiers learned from the German soldiers.

The war in Korea, however—never popular with anyone in war-weary Europe—has had some influence on the mode, though undoubtedly more in America than in England.

Conical hats, copied from Korean straw headgear, were fashionable the first year of the war. White cotton high-necked

coolie coats are still popular, while the 'mandarin' neck-line has been smart both on garments intended for summer wear, and also on dresses for winter wear. It became the acme of fashion in America to wear what was borrowed from the heavily padded Korean winter coat, transformed into a sumptuous opera wrap. We must note in passing the successful revival of *Chu Chin Chow* in 1953, this time on ice.



#### POLITICS AND FASHION

The Korean war is reflected in this lady's fashionable straw hat copied from a Korean peasant hat. Note the mandarin collar. English and American, 1953.

Traffic with the East, however, is not one way only. The West has also had a considerable influence on the East.

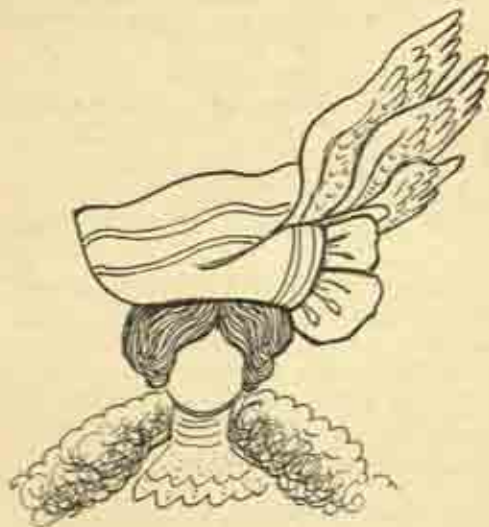
Chinese girl factory-workers in Hong Kong, enticed by Western ideas, treat themselves to a perm, and for the benefit of such clients cheap perms are supplied for as low a price as two shillings.

The cinema has taught millions of Indians and Chinese, Negroes and Malaysians, exactly how Western lovers embrace and kiss, and, according to informed observers, has to that degree lowered their opinion of white people, because of its lack of propriety.

It was from the East that we learned the use of perfume and

cosmetics, the luxury of silk and the arts of war. These tokens of civilization we are to-day sending back to the East, synthetically produced by the cunning of our scientists and multiplied a thousandfold by the reproductive capacity of our giant factories. Fashionable ladies in London and New York study the Japanese art of flower-arrangement, while in Tokyo Japanese business-men don bowler hats in obeisance to the Goddess Finance, whose temple is the Stock Exchange.

And here we must end our book, with the gentle reminder to our readers that fashion has the same objective in view as poor Moll Flanders—"to live great, rich, and high, and I know not what."



"SMART FELT WALKING-HAT TRIMMED WITH  
VELVET AND DUCK'S WINGS. PRICE 9s. 6d."

*Marshall and Snelgrove's Catalogue, 1904.*



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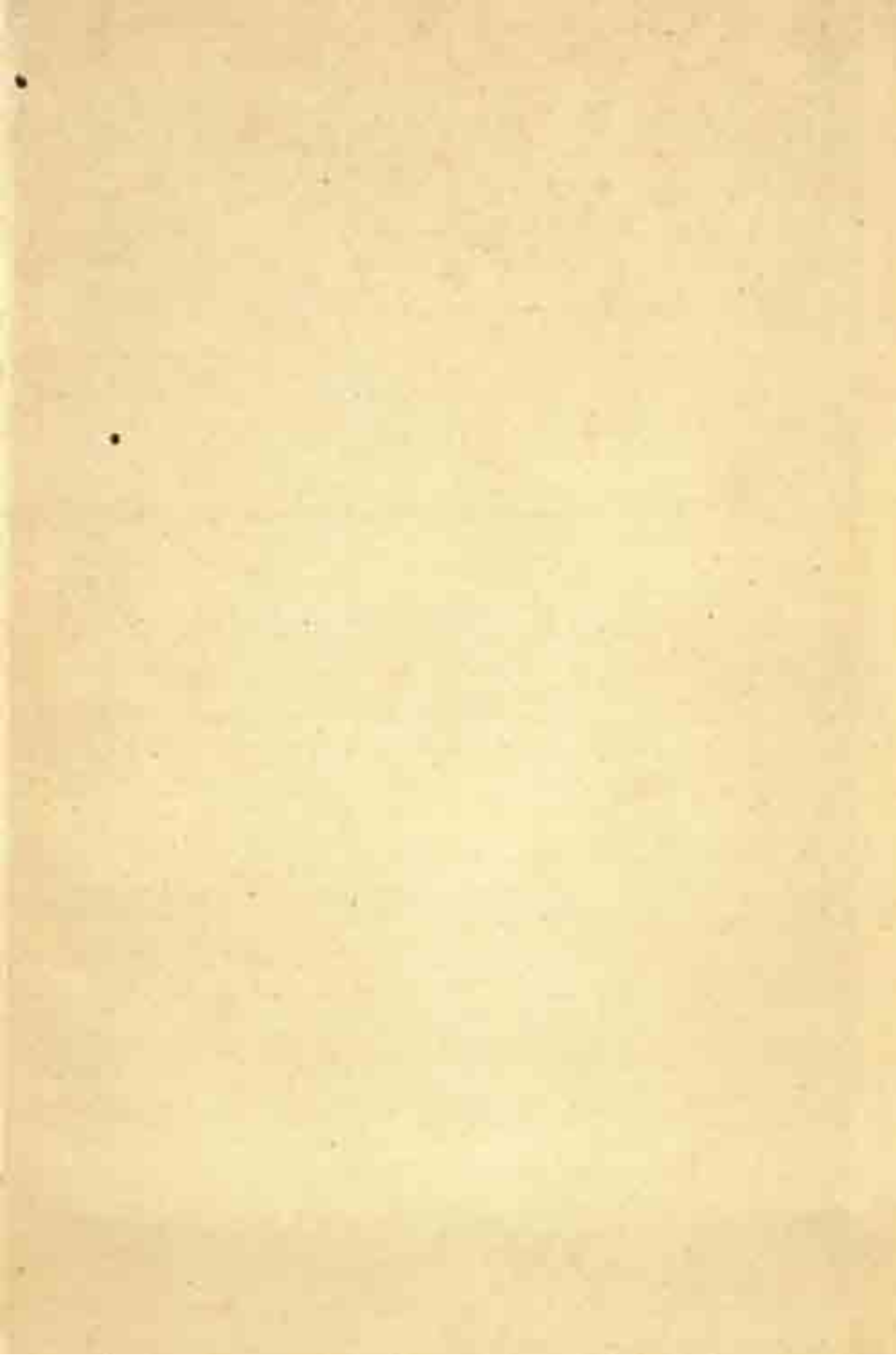


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